

# THE ULTIMATE INTERVIEW QUESTION

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to transform your  
hiring approach



  
HEART  
TALENT

All great organisations have one thing in common.

They know how to attract, engage  
and retain great people.



**Good recruitment  
doesn't happen by accident.  
Hiring managers and recruitment  
partners must work together in a  
consultative partnership to drive  
the best results. This includes  
designing an effective interview.**

**- Cynthia Harris, Heart Talent**

**We love helping leaders transform  
organisations with the people they hire.**

**As part of our commitment to supporting  
you to attract and engage the best talent,  
Heart Talent has developed a range of  
resources and tools for hiring managers.**







## How can the humble interview uncover high impact insights and transform your hiring?

We have tried and tested various interview techniques and questions over the years. We also follow the work of industry experts, authors and thought leaders across the global talent acquisition community.

To make the best hiring decisions, you'll need a well-designed interview process, high-impact questions and strong active listening and analysis skills.


Across any organisation or business, no matter which role you're recruiting, there is one interview question that will always deliver the most useful insights.

The key to  
effective  
hiring is being  
brutally  
honest.

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This is according to eternal optimist and leadership expert Simon Sinek, best known for his book **Start with Why**. Sinek studies, writes and speaks about the remarkable patterns in how the world's greatest leaders and organisations think, act and communicate.

Put aside the job description and your wish list of the ideal candidate's skills and experience (just for a moment), and let's get real.

Before you even get to the interview stage, authenticity and transparency are critical to your employee value proposition and employer brand.



**People respond to transparency and authenticity. There is no perfect job or organisation. It's equally important to share your positive and negative narrative throughout the recruitment process.**

- Cynthia Harris, Heart Talent

The recruitment process is the start of a professional relationship. If you consider the people you're interviewing as potential team members, it's obvious that honesty is the best policy.

During every interview, it is critical that you're completely honest about the role, the team, the wider organisation – and the challenges that lie ahead. Describing these challenges is also your opportunity to ask the ultimate interview question.

**Transform your hiring with this question:**

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**One of the biggest challenges you would face in this role is [insert challenge here].**

**How would you go about tackling that?**

# Why this is a great question

Aside from giving the candidate a 'warts and all' picture of the career opportunity you're offering, this hypothetical question gives you a glimpse of the future.

You're looking for the candidate to articulate how they would address a key challenge/s they're bound to be faced with in this role. So while it's hypothetical, it's very powerful.

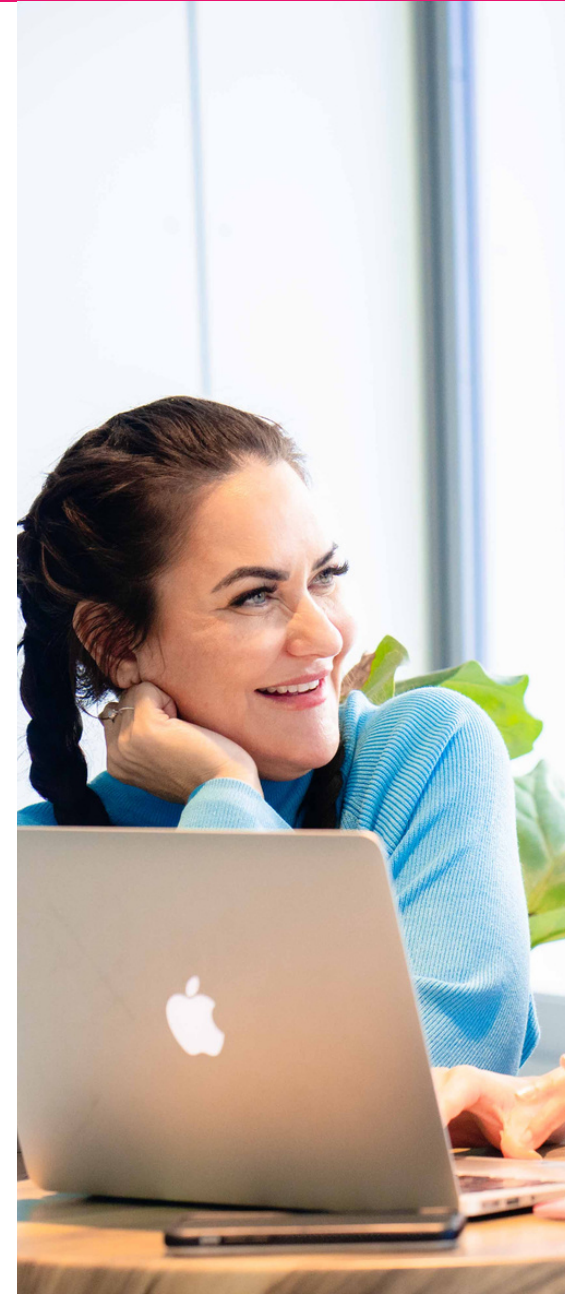
This question is an opportunity for you to understand how they might respond to that real-life challenge. Their answer is likely to draw on previous experiences, allowing you to consider if their response aligns with the behaviours and thinking you want to have in your team.

Listen carefully for the exact steps they would take to tackle your hypothetical challenge, and think about how closely their approach matches your current ways of working.

You might also want to listen for signs of the thinking behind their approach.

If your interviewee can't provide evidence through previous examples, that's a red flag.

This question will also uncover various key attributes individuals and organisations will need in the future of work including adaptability, problem solving and a growth mindset.





# How to use this question

You can use different versions of this question a couple of times throughout the interview.

Simply identify the key challenges and rephrase the question around each one.

Each time your interviewee answers a question, you have an opportunity to dig deeper with a couple of follow up questions about the example they've provided. Here are some probing follow up questions:

Tell me about the scale of the project or challenge you've described. How did it arise, and who was involved?

What timeframe or deadlines were you dealing with? How did you plan your process and manage your time?

Did you make any mistakes or face any setbacks during this project? What happened to resolve these?

If you were faced with this challenge again, would you do anything differently? What did you learn from the experience?

# BONUS QUESTION

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Because we're incredibly passionate about helping you hire top talent, it's hard to stop at just one question.

While all evidence shows that the question around challenges uncovers the most useful insights, here's one more question that we recommend you ask in every interview, regardless of your organisation and the role you're recruiting.



The background is a solid pink color. It is decorated with numerous small, semi-transparent dots in white and yellow, scattered across the surface, particularly concentrated in the corners.

**What three things are most  
important to you when you're  
choosing a job and employer?**



# Why this is a great question

This question recognises that recruitment is a two-way street.

Simon Sinek refers to this as the 'give and take' method. When hiring for his team, he always asks two key questions:

What is it that you have to give to our organisation?

What is it that you selfishly want from us?

This question about what matters is also linked to your employee value proposition (EVP) ie your unique offering for talent (both current and prospective employees).

Engaging and retaining the best talent requires alignment and mutual benefit.

Your EVP should ideally match what the candidate is looking for. For example, if they are looking for fast career progression and you are a small business with a flat structure and no big growth plans, you may not be the best fit for each other – it's best to explore this during the interview process.

While understanding motivations is recognised as key to employee engagement, it should also be part of your recruitment process, especially if you want to attract and retain high-performing, high potential talent.

Exploring what matters to your interviewee is also part of assessing how they might be able to add to the culture of your organisation. For more culture add questions, see our guide to high impact interview questions.

# GOOD RECRUITMENT DOESN'T HAPPEN BY ACCIDENT.

A well-designed interview is critical to uncovering the insights you need to make the best hiring decisions.

We hope you find this guide to the ultimate interview question useful. We look forward to hearing your comments and feedback.

Please get in touch with  
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**FORGET WHAT YOU KNOW ABOUT RECRUITERS.**

**EXPECT BETTER**

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**Helping purpose-led people build great teams and careers.**