
Executive interview questions

These examples of **Executive interview questions** can help you identify the best candidates for upper management positions and C-level. Use the most suitable questions to assess candidates' team-leading skills in these important roles.

What to ask executive candidates

When interviewing candidates for executive-level and C-suite roles, look for the following traits:

Strategic vision

Executives participate in the [decision-making](#) process of the company and are responsible for driving growth. Ask questions that reveal whether candidates understand your company's needs and are able to help you achieve your long-term objectives.

Leadership ability

Employees in executive roles need to manage and motivate their team members effectively. Look for people who make tough decisions confidently, have strong [problem-solving skills](#) and lead by example.

Goal-oriented approach

Executives are held accountable for their team's results. Use questions to identify professionals with a track record of success. That could include, for example, consistently meeting sales quotas, launching successful products or implementing profitable advertising campaigns.

Here are sample interview questions for executives you can ask during your hiring process:

Example interview questions for executives

- How would you describe your leadership style? Tell us about a time you had to shift your style due to unexpected circumstances (e.g. tight deadlines or high turnover rate)
- What's the most constructive way to give feedback to an employee who is underperforming?
- Are you familiar with the 360-degree performance review? How would you react if you received negative feedback from a team member?
- What's the most important piece of advice you'd pass on to your team? (e.g. regarding time or stress management)

- What would you do if a department manager consistently opposed your ideas?
- Describe a successful project you managed end-to-end. What challenges did you face and what did you do to overcome them?
- Imagine your team is discouraged after a fail (e.g. losing a big client.) How would you inspire them?
- How often do you hold meetings with both your team leaders and the company's executive management team? How do you prepare for these meetings?
- Tell me about a time your idea improved the company in some way. How did you make sure it was implemented?
- Describe a time you had to take quick action on a critical issue. How did you ensure that your team members promptly learned and followed the action?
- Tell me about a mistake that you made at work. What happened and what did you learn from that experience?

How to assess executive candidates' answers

- Ideally, an executive stays with your company in the long-run. Keep this in mind when interviewing candidates. Look for people with career goals that align with your business objectives.
- Executive candidates usually have years of work experience. Ask them to describe examples from their past positions to learn how they approach difficult situations and what their biggest accomplishments are.
- Include the entire executive management team of your company in the hiring process. When choosing your next executive, opt for a professional who'll fit with your team's culture but will pitch new ideas.
- [Diversity](#) is the key for a thriving workplace. Keep an eye out for executive-level candidates from varying backgrounds.
- Two or three [interview rounds](#) will help you build full profiles for your candidates. For executive-level positions, hire candidates who combine in-depth industry knowledge with [soft skills](#), like [team management](#), communication and decision-making.

Red flags

- **Signs of stress or discomfort.** Provide candidates with hypothetical scenarios to test how they face challenges. If they seem too stressed or struggle with responding, they're likely to shut down when real difficulties occur on the job.
- **Lack of preparation.** Candidates who're genuinely interested in an executive position, will have done research on your company. They should know about your products/services, competitors and have a clear idea of how they can contribute to your objectives.
- **Poor presentation skills.** Executives represent your company. They likely talk to clients, attend conferences and manage internal teams. If they lack confidence and come across as reserved or unprofessional, a C-level role mightn't suit them.

- **Arrogance.** Employees who hold an executive position are decision-makers, but good executives don't tout a "know-it-all" attitude. Instead, they admit their mistakes, are fair and open-minded and have high levels of [emotional intelligence](#).
- **Dishonest answers.** If you spot any signs of a candidate trying to hide or spin the truth, reconsider moving them forward to the next hiring stage. Executives set the example for the rest of employees and need to be professional, trustworthy and ethical.