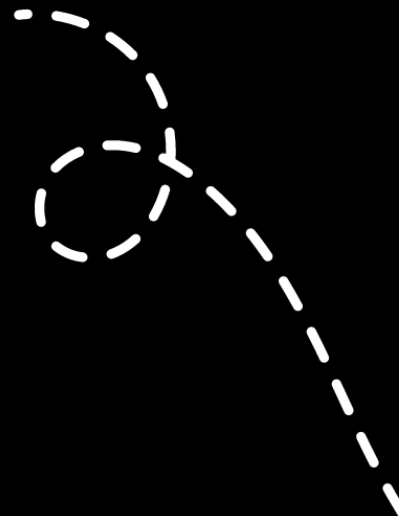


itch

YOUR GUIDE TO
EFFECTIVE INTERVIEWS



DESIGNING AN EFFECTIVE INTERVIEW

When you think about, you spend more time with the people in your workplace than you do with your loved ones. You only get a short amount of time to assess whether a candidate is the right person for the job, and someone you will be able to work with harmoniously. This means that an effective interview process is critical in preventing a recruitment horror story.

That's why we've developed this guide to assist you to make the most of your interview process, so you can make sure you get the information you need to make an informed decision.

Before we jump ship into the interview process, it's wise to first consider the following:

1. *Is what you want, what you need?*

2. *Are you addressing the right things?*

3. *Identify what you need*

1

Is what you want, what you need?

There are times when outside influences such as market conditions can result in movement of employees, but with this aside it is imperative that you go into the interview process with the objective of employing a person who is suited to the business and management style. For example, a Hiring Manager might be seeking someone "with strong growth potential, who is dynamic and highly motivated" but the strategic plans for the business are to grow conservatively and slowly. Your interview process will not be successful if a manager is looking for someone who is not aligned with the business.

At the same time consider your management style and the impact on the success of the recruitment outcomes. After all, we have all heard that saying that "people don't leave a business, they leave a manager, (ouch).

2

Are you addressing the right things?

We have found that a common misconception of hiring managers and leaders is that they have solid interview and selection strategies in place, but there is a discrepancy between what they say they want and what information they use to make decisions. For example, saying the most important things you need in an employee are "soft skills, like commitment, leadership, and adaptability, but the hiring process focuses more on references and formal qualifications. If you do not assess and select based on the qualities and behaviours you have identified as important, you are likely to overlook the best person for the job.

3

Identify what you need

Before you start writing that interview guide, you should sit down and have a really good think about the job. A job description is a good place to start if you have one, but if not, try thinking about the day-to-day work of the job, what challenges will arise with that work, and what skills/knowledge will be needed (and which can be learnt). If someone great is leaving the job – get their help in this process – or even think about what made them so great so you know what to look for in the next person!

You should also take some time to consider the values, vision and culture that is unique to your company. Think about what matters to you – are you all environmentally conscious? Is working overtime the ‘norm’? Do you want someone who can help you change your culture, or someone who will just enhance it? You may need to undertake a mini culture-audit so you can identify what makes someone ‘one of us’ in your business.

Once you know some of these answers, you can select or write questions which will help you to assess objectively whether the candidate ‘has what it takes’.

THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

Need assistance with:

- Job design?*
- Job descriptions?*
- Simple culture audits?*

Our team can help!

Essentially, interviewing is a process where individuals exchange information for about an hour to decide whether they can work together long-term. Understandably, it can be stressful for both the interviewer and the interviewee. Stress has an incredible impact on our ability to communicate effectively, and there are few places where effective communication has more impact than in a job interview. With this in mind, it is key that the very first thing you do in an interview is try to mitigate stress (on both sides of the table) as much as possible, and try to create a space where honest and open communication can be achieved.

Being well-prepared ahead of the interview is just as important in mitigating stress, as how you make the candidate feel welcome when you meet them.



THE NITTY GRITTY

1. BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

- Ensure the skills and attributes you are looking for are clear in the minds of all interviewers.
 - Read through their resume and write down any questions you may have.
 - Make sure you understand the job description and the required skills and have identified the challenges of the role or the work environment.
 - Minimise all distractions – interviewing at a busy café or in an open area in the office is not ideal, so try to find a private meeting space like a board room.
 - Leave your laptop, phone, and smart watch in your office – if you are expecting something that cannot wait an hour, leave instructions with another staff member.
 - Make sure you book sufficient time in your calendar for the meeting and a de-brief so you can clear your mind and be present at the meeting.
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2. MEET AND GREET

- Be welcoming and friendly and let them see your personality.
 - Introduce yourself and your position within the company and your relationship to the role you are interviewing for.
 - Give them some information about how the interview will progress and what to expect.
 - Break the ice with some discussion about the company and why it exists and what you are trying to achieve – you may want to ask them what they know about your business or why they want to work there as well!
-

3. Q+A

- Use your prepared interview guide to ensure you cover all the key assessment items, and to ensure you can compare candidates objectively, not just on whether you 'like' them.
 - Take succinct notes – be careful not to spend the whole time writing, or they may feel like they are being interrogated. If there is more than one interviewer, you might want to make one person responsible for taking detailed notes.
 - Ask any questions that came up when you reviewed their resume (e.g. reasons for leaving, job titles, duties and responsibilities).
 - Give the candidate an opportunity to ask questions that haven't arisen during your discussion. Provide answers where possible but it's perfectly ok to say you will get back to them if they ask a question you don't have an answer for. An interview is a two-way conversation – the candidate needs to assess whether the role and the company is right, just as much as you are assessing them!
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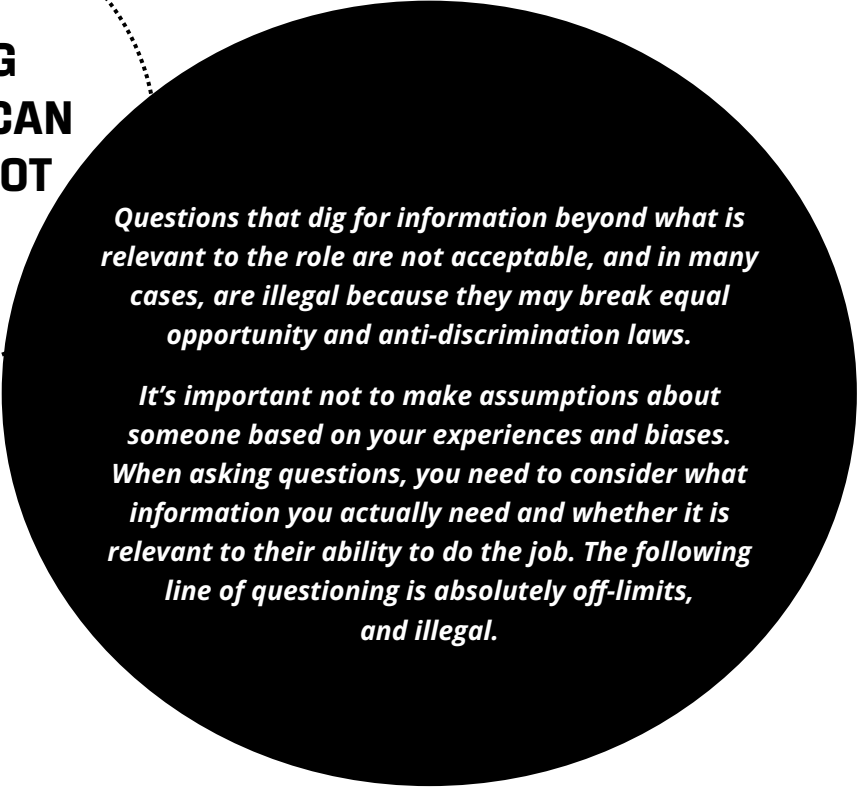
4. WRAP THINGS UP NEATLY

- Give an indication of the next step in the process and timing – be honest!
- Resist the urge to offer them the job at the interview – even if you think they are perfect – you need to spend time considering the interview, comparing to other candidates, and doing additional qualifying such as references or testing.
- Thank the person for their time (even if they aren't right for the role – protect your brand!)
- Feedback is valuable, you can be detailed or broad, either way letting candidates know that they have not been successful is the right thing to do... full stop!

WHAT TO ASK?



KNOWING WHAT YOU CAN AND CANNOT ASK



Questions that dig for information beyond what is relevant to the role are not acceptable, and in many cases, are illegal because they may break equal opportunity and anti-discrimination laws.

It's important not to make assumptions about someone based on your experiences and biases. When asking questions, you need to consider what information you actually need and whether it is relevant to their ability to do the job. The following line of questioning is absolutely off-limits, and illegal.



-
- × Are you in a same-sex relationship?
 - × How old are you?
 - × What's your ethnic background?
 - × What religion are you?
 - × Are you pregnant or planning to start a family?
 - × Who do you vote for?
 - × Are you a member of a union?
 - × Do you have a physical or mental disability?
 - × Are you married?
 - × How many children do you have?

Instead...

You should provide a lot of detail about the job, and the conditions of work (everything from expected stress to likely overtime to the physical demands of the job) and then ask them whether there is anything that would prevent them from being able to fulfil the duties of the role. If you can make reasonable adjustments to the job to account for this, you legally must. This may be offering reasonable flexibility to working parents or making workstation adjustments for physical disabilities.

There is a lot of legislation (state and federal) which protects people from discrimination in a job interview, but the key ones to note are:

→ **Equal Opportunity Act 1984 (WA)**

Discrimination on the basis of sex, sexual orientation (including by association), marital status, pregnancy, breastfeeding, race, religious or political conviction, age (including by association), impairment (including by association), family responsibility or family status, gender history, and publication of relevant details on Fines Enforcement Registrar's website. Sexual harassment and racial harassment are also prohibited under this Act.

→ **Spent Convictions Act 1988 (WA)**

Discrimination on the basis of having a spent conviction is prohibited under this Act.

→ **Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth)**

Protects an employee (or potential employee) from adverse action based on discriminatory reasons (includes the same rights as protected in other Acts, but using Industrial Relations law instead of Human Rights Law).

Federal legislation offering similar EEO/Anti-discrimination rights as the WA legislation.

Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth)

Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)

Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)


Age Discrimination Act 2004 (Cth)

There are some circumstances when such information can be requested if it is reasonably required for a non-discriminatory purpose. For example, if a person applies for a role at a warehouse that requires heavy lifting, it would be lawful to ask about a physical disability insofar as it affected their ability to perform heavy lifting.

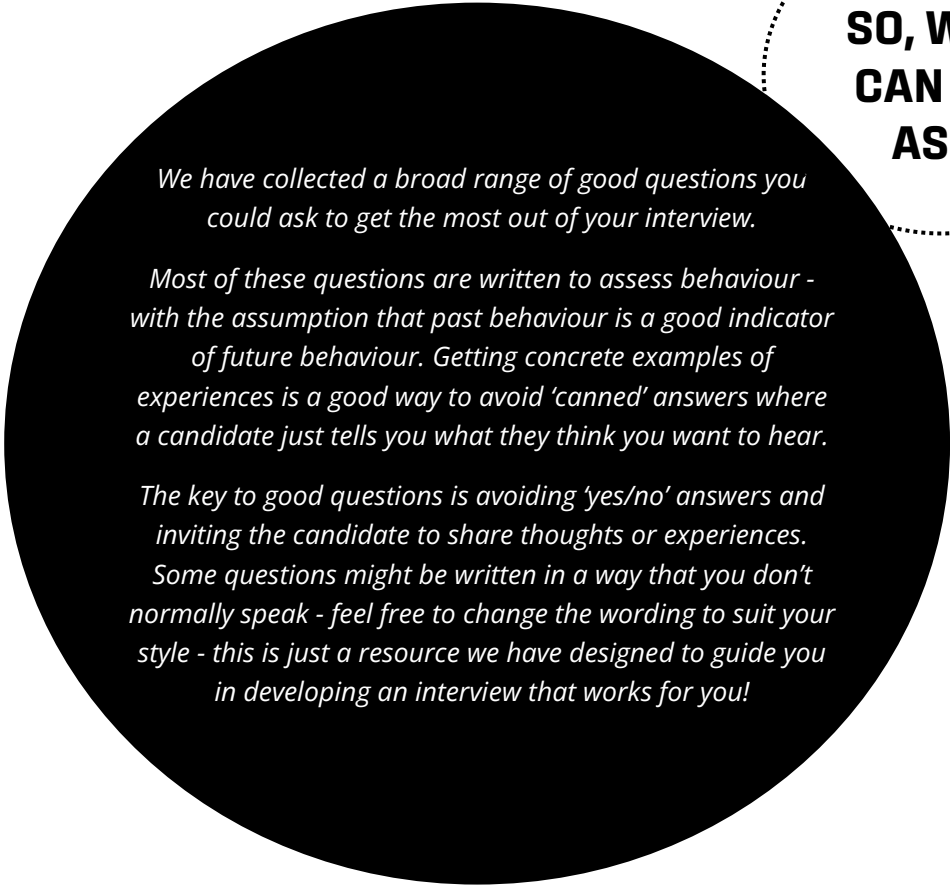
For more information visit: <https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/employers/quick-guide-australian-discrimination-laws>



Please speak to us before navigating this grey area!



**SO, WHAT
CAN YOU
ASK?**



We have collected a broad range of good questions you could ask to get the most out of your interview.

Most of these questions are written to assess behaviour - with the assumption that past behaviour is a good indicator of future behaviour. Getting concrete examples of experiences is a good way to avoid 'canned' answers where a candidate just tells you what they think you want to hear.

The key to good questions is avoiding 'yes/no' answers and inviting the candidate to share thoughts or experiences.

Some questions might be written in a way that you don't normally speak - feel free to change the wording to suit your style - this is just a resource we have designed to guide you in developing an interview that works for you!



QUESTIONS THAT ASSESS COMMON DESIRED ATTRIBUTES...

- ✓ Think about a time there was a big change at work that you had no control over...
- ✓ Tell me about a time when you were asked to do something you had never done before...
- ✓ When have you embraced a new system, process, technology, or an idea at work?
- ✓ Recall a time when you were assigned a job that was outside of your job description...
- ✓ Tell me about the biggest change you have had to deal with in a workplace...
- ✓ Tell me about a time where you had to adapt to a colleague's working style that was different to yours in order to complete a project or achieve your objective...

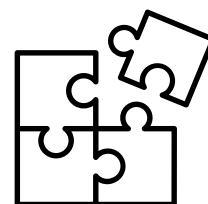
Add one of these qualifiers to the end of these questions to get a complete story:

- ✓ How did you react?
- ✓ What were the challenges?
- ✓ How did you handle the situation?
- ✓ What was the outcome?
- ✓ Did you learn anything about yourself?

CULTURAL FIT

Every company has a unique culture built on shared values and common goals – culture dictates the ‘unwritten rules’ that impact everything from how people speak, to their work habits, to their relationships with colleagues and managers. While you can’t discriminate or make assumptions based on bias, you can assess cultural-fit based on shared values and the kinds of things a candidate prioritises to be ‘happy’ at work.

Hiring people who don’t ‘fit’ your culture can damage your business; even impacting the engagement of other employees. But employees who thrive in your culture are more likely to have job satisfaction, superior performance, and a lower rate of turnover.



QUESTIONS THAT ASSESS CULTURAL FIT...

- ✓ What are the three things that are most important to you in your job?
- ✓ When have you been really happy at work?
- ✓ Tell me about your favourite social work event – what made it so memorable?
- ✓ What is important to you in a workplace?
- ✓ What’s the most interesting thing about you that’s not on your resume?
- ✓ What ‘makes your day’ in the workplace?
- ✓ How would you describe the culture at previous companies you’ve worked at?
Which was your favourite work culture?
Which was the worst?
Why?
- ✓ How do you like to be managed?
- ✓ Who has been the best [supervisor] or [manager] or [colleague] or [assistant] you have worked with and why?
- ✓ How do you maintain a work-life balance?
- ✓ Aside from work, what are you passionate about?
- ✓ What do you think is the biggest misconception your co-workers have about you?
Why might they have this opinion?

COLLABORATION

Hiring people who are able to work well with others is essential to having a productive, happy team. Collaboration can cultivate both a sense of community and diversity of ideas. However, some roles do not involve collaboration, and may need someone who is highly autonomous and able to make independent decisions. These questions can be used to help you identify a candidate's preferred 'style' of working, and you can match that to the reality of the role and your business.



QUESTIONS THAT ASSESS COLLABORATIVE SKILLS...

- ✓ What has been one of your favourite collaborations at work, what role did you play and what was the outcome?
- ✓ Can you share an experience where a project dramatically shifted direction at the last minute or went wrong? What part did you play in getting everything back on track?
- ✓ What do you consider the key to a team functioning successfully?
- ✓ Do you feel more energised when you are working alone or when you are working as part of a team?
- ✓ Have you ever been a member of a team that struggled or failed to accomplish a goal?
Why do you think the team failed and what would you do differently if you could start over?
- ✓ When you have had to work remotely, what was your biggest challenge? What did you miss the most about working in a centralised place?
- ✓ Have you had to work with someone who was difficult to get along with?
Who was it?
What was the characteristic you found the most frustrating?
How did you handle interactions with that person?
- ✓ Have you ever had to communicate with someone who did not understand you?
Was this challenging and why?
What did you do to communicate more effectively?

LEADERSHIP

Leaders aren't always in a leadership role. Leadership skills mean that an employee can communicate effectively, foster connection, inspire and persuade those around them. It is said that non-leaders with leadership skills accept challenges and changes in responsibilities, are flexible, set goals and continuously aim to improve.

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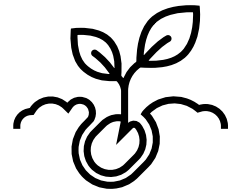
QUESTIONS THAT ASSESS LEADERSHIP SKILLS...

- ✓ Tell me about the last time something significant didn't go according to plan at work...
What was your role?
What was the outcome?
- ✓ Describe a situation where you needed to persuade an individual or a team to see things from your perspective...
How did you make this happen?
What were the results?
- ✓ Describe your leadership style.
- ✓ Give an example of a time you had to manage a difficult employee...
How did you go about it?
Did you manage to get them to change their attitude?
- ✓ How do you motivate your team?
- ✓ How do you set priorities for the different projects you manage?
- ✓ Walk me through a time you managed a complex team project. What was your approach and how did you delegate tasks?
- ✓ How do you give feedback to your peers?
- ✓ What's the most difficult professional decision you've had to make recently, and why?
- ✓ How do you help your team grow and develop?
- ✓ Tell me about a time you had to innovate to complete a task.
- ✓ Tell me about the best leader or manager you ever had. What did you like about them?
- ✓ In what ways do you demonstrate leadership qualities outside of the office?
- ✓ Are you more comfortable with verbal or written communication?



GROWTH POTENTIAL

Hiring, onboarding and upskilling employees can be a drain on resources. It is estimated that it costs on average 150% of an employee's salary to replace them (and even more for management roles). Whilst you need to hire an employee who can do the job now, potential to grow into new roles within your company is an excellent way of seeing a return on your investment (plus you also retain your company's intellectual property).



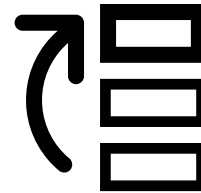
High-potential employees not only excel in their current role but have the ability and drive to offer far more than just what you hired them to do. However, if you are hiring someone for a role that has no room for growth, you may not want to hire someone with potential (or ambition). It's all about being realistic about the opportunities your business can offer.

QUESTIONS THAT ASSESS GROWTH POTENTIAL...

- ✓ Have you ever requested additional training?
What was the training and why did you request it?
Did you end up doing the training and was it worthwhile?
- ✓ If you could acquire a new skill what would it be?
- ✓ Have you ever volunteered to expand your knowledge at work, without being directed to do so?
- ✓ What are your career goals and aspirations?
What could get in your way of achieving them?
What is stopping you from reaching your goals with your current employer?
- ✓ What did you want to do for a career when you were growing up?
- ✓ When was the last occasion you asked for direct feedback from a [supervisor] or [manager] or [colleague] or [assistant]?
What prompted you to seek feedback?
- ✓ What's the biggest career goal you have achieved to date?
- ✓ Tell me a time that you felt out of your depth at work?
Why were you out of your depth?
How did you handle the situation?

PRIORITISATION

Stephen Covey suggests that “the key is not to prioritise what’s on your schedule, but to schedule your priorities”. Being able to prioritise is a skill that ensures needs are met, goals are achieved, and focus is maintained. Technology can certainly assist with time management, but there is still a specific skill in being able to keep up with simultaneous urgent requests from a variety of channels (sometimes it is even made harder because of technology and the modern ‘always on’ lifestyle).



QUESTIONS THAT ASSESS PRIORITISATION SKILLS...

- ✓ When have you juggled several tasks or projects at the same time?
- ✓ Tell me about a project that you planned. What were the steps that you undertook to get the project to completion?
Did anything not go to plan?
If you could start the project again, what would you do differently?
- ✓ Describe a time when you have felt stressed or overwhelmed at work.
What caused the stress and what did you do to overcome it?
- ✓ Give an example of a time when you delegated an important task successfully.
- ✓ How do you determine what amount of time is reasonable for a task?
- ✓ If you’re reporting to more than one manager, how do you prioritise your duties?
- ✓ Describe a typical day at work. What’s your morning routine?
- ✓ You return to work after a two-week leave and find fifty new emails in your inbox. How do you choose which emails to open and answer first?
- ✓ Can you describe a situation in which you were late to complete a task or you missed a deadline? Have you ever missed a deadline? If so, what happened? If not, how do you make sure you’re not falling behind?
- ✓ What productivity tools (e.g. time-management or project-management software) have you found useful?
- ✓ How would you react if your manager suddenly asked you to complete a challenging task on a tight deadline?
- ✓ How do you prioritise tasks?
- ✓ How do you limit distractions?
- ✓ How do you manage deadlines?
- ✓ How do you balance work and personal life?

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

If IQ is the measure of intelligence, EQ is the capacity to understand and manage emotions. It plays a role in how employees manage stress and conflict and plays a part in overall performance. Important EQ measures include self-awareness, self-management, motivation, empathy, and the ability to foster and maintain relationships with others. Customer service, sales, management, and high-pressure jobs particularly benefit from a high EQ.

QUESTIONS THAT ASSESS EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE...



- ✓ Have you ever lost your temper at work?
What was the cause?
Do you think the reaction was justified?
- ✓ Who inspires you and why?
- ✓ Do you think you will keep in touch with your current co-workers when you leave your job? Why?
- ✓ Tell me a time that you felt that you made a positive impact on someone.
- ✓ Do you trust your instincts?
Tell me about a time when trusting your instincts paid off.
Tell me about a time your instincts were proven wrong – how did you react?
- ✓ How do you like to celebrate success?
- ✓ Have you ever had to change your behaviour?
Why did you have to change, and how did you change?
- ✓ Describe a time when you had to deliver some bad news to someone, how did you do it and how did it make you feel?
Did you follow up later? If so, how did you go about this?
- ✓ Have you ever had to neutralise a stressful situation in a professional environment?
Tell me about what you did.
- ✓ Describe an example of when you have had to be confrontational to achieve results.
What did you do and how was it received?
- ✓ How good are you at asking for help?
- ✓ Tell me about a time you had to ask for help.
- ✓ Have you ever noticed that someone at work was having a bad day?
How did you know? What did you do?
- ✓ Tell me about a time when you had a dispute with a colleague. What did you do to deal with the situation?
- ✓ Describe a time when a colleague came to you with a problem. How did you respond?
- ✓ Tell me about a time when understanding someone else's perspective helped you accomplish a task or resolve an issue.
- ✓ Tell me about a time when you motivated someone to accomplish a task. How did you motivate them?
- ✓ Do you think it's important to develop a rapport with your colleagues?
Why?
What would happen if you did/didn't?

SITUATIONAL QUESTIONS

Situational questioning is different to behavioural questioning. Instead of asking for examples of experiences, the questions are designed to investigate how a candidate would handle a hypothetical situation. They are particularly effective for assessing how someone deals with difficult issues, moral dilemmas, and real-life circumstances they may face in the job you are hiring for.

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QUESTIONS THAT ARE JUST A LITTLE BIT DIFFERENT...

- ✓ What would you do if you made a mistake that no one else noticed?
Would you address the error and risk slowing things down?
Would you ignore it to keep the project or task moving forward?
- ✓ What would you do if you were asked to perform a task you've never done before?
- ✓ How do you react when you do not meet your own expectations?
- ✓ You normally work with other people, but you unexpectedly have to work on your own for the day... What is the first thing you would do differently when no one else is around?
- ✓ How would you handle it if your team resisted a new idea you introduced?
- ✓ How would you handle it if you were unsatisfied by an aspect of your job?
- ✓ How would you handle an instance of receiving criticism from a superior?
- ✓ If you know your manager is 100% wrong about something how would you handle it?
- ✓ You are working with a colleague who stubbornly disagrees with you. How do you persuade them to see your point of view?
- ✓ Imagine you have been working on something challenging and put in extra discretionary effort to get it done on time and to a high standard.

A LITTLE BIT DIFFERENT...

Want to mix things up and assess if a candidate can think on their feet? Want to assess if they have a sense of humour or if they are just a little bit (or the right amount of) weird? We have you covered!

Be careful with including too many of this style of question – and make sure you know which job or culture-related outcome you are trying to assess by asking the question (Don't allow your personal bias to creep in because you disagree with someone's music taste or favourite movie!).

QUESTIONS THAT ARE JUST A LITTLE BIT DIFFERENT...

- ✓ Describe yourself in one word
 - At work*
 - At home*
- ✓ What didn't you get a chance to include on your resume?
- ✓ What is the last skill around the house you learnt?
- ✓ It is one year from now, what travel plans are you making?
- ✓ How would your best friend describe you?
- ✓ What are the top three tracks on the soundtrack to your life?
- ✓ What is one thing under \$10 that you cannot live without?
- ✓ What have I not asked you that you think I should have?
- ✓ What was the last really great book you read? How did it impact your life?
- ✓ What is your favourite genre of film and why?
- ✓ What is your favourite sit-com or TV series and why?
- ✓ Imagine that after you step out of this interview, you find a lotto ticket that ends up winning \$1 million. What would you do?
 - Would you do anything differently if it was \$100 million?*
- ✓ If you had to be shipwrecked on a deserted island, but all your human needs—such as food and water— were taken care of, what two items would you want to have with you?
- ✓ If you got to choose to have any superpower, what would it be?
- ✓ What was the last gift you gave someone?
- ✓ If you were the CEO of a company, name one thing you would make compulsory in the office and one thing you would ban in the office?

