

# Leadership Interview Questions

**Leadership interview questions** focus on exploring and evaluating recognized leadership competencies. The questions are designed to assess whether the candidate has both leadership skills and leadership potential.

Management and leadership differ in a number of crucial ways. Management is a hands-on component of leadership - responsible for such functions as planning, organizing and controlling. Effective leadership is the ability to inspire followers to listen to and follow a vision; the ability to innovate and drive an organization or people towards new ideas and directions. The ability to persuade and influence, demonstrate integrity, communicate and motivate, innovate and implement strategic vision, demonstrate drive and tenacity are all recognized leadership skills.

Leadership interview questions will require candidates to provide examples of how they have demonstrated these leadership competencies and are asked in the format of behavioral or competency-based interview questions.

**How would your staff and colleagues describe your leadership style? Give us an example to support your answer.**

The purpose of this question is to find out if the style is congruent with the organizational culture. The perceptive leader is able to adapt his or her style to fit the follower's, employee's and organizational needs.

**What are the most important values and ethics you demonstrate as a leader? Give us an example of these in practice.**

Integrity- being truthful and trustworthy and having conviction - is an essential leadership competency. The effective leader demonstrates values and ethics in personal behavior and integrates these values and ethics into organizational practices and activities. A good leader acts with the courage of his/her convictions. While leaders are open with their employees and model honesty, transparency and fairness, they do not violate confidences or divulge potentially harmful information.

**Name some situations in which a leader may fail. Tell us about a time when you failed as a leader?**

A number of factors can fall outside a leader's control such as the available skill pool in the organization, time constraints, the economic climate. If employees are lethargic and negatively orientated, it can create a situation ripe for failure. In answering leadership interview questions that explore how one deals with difficult challenges, listen for how the candidates were able to analyze the setback and seek honest feedback to learn from failure and how they used the difficult situation to encourage constructive

questioning of policies and practices. This is an opportunity to show what their ability is to be resilient in the face of failure and to constantly work towards improvement.

**What role does leadership play for a manager? How have you demonstrated this with your managers?**

The leader's role is to communicate the strategic vision to management with clarity...to translate the vision into concrete direction and plans; to identify and communicate priorities, short term objectives, timelines, performance measures, clear accountabilities and performance agreements to management; and to provide quality judgment and advice.

**Tell us about an innovative solution you developed to a non-traditional problem.**

Effective leaders promote change and innovation. Finding solutions to unique problems are facilitated by encouraging a constant information flow in all directions and emphasizing responsiveness to changing demands.

**Tell us about a time when the going got really tough. How did you rally the staff and build morale?**

Leaders build a sense of common purpose by promoting the organizational vision both internally and externally. They develop and implement effective communication strategies within the organization. Remove barriers to collaboration. Provide clear direction on priorities. This type of question hopefully prompts the candidate to give clear and honest feedback to inspire trust.

**What methods have you used to gain commitment from your team?**

Leaders gain commitment by influencing and persuading the team to set objectives and buy into the process. They establish a spirit of cooperation and cohesion for goal attainment. They take the team into the performing phase as quickly as possible. Leaders encourage debate and ideas from all stakeholders. They inspire a commitment to success and excellence by demonstrating passionate personal commitment and promote a productive culture by valuing individuals and their contributions.

**All leaders have to deal with conflict situations. Describe a recent disagreement or conflict you personally had to handle.**

Leadership interview questions explore how a candidate handles conflict and seeks responses that look at their ability to understand and respect different views.

Candidates demonstrate their ability to settle dispute by focusing on solving the problem taking into consideration the personalities involved, to evaluate the viability of different dispute resolution mechanisms available, and provide support and expertise to others...to negotiate compromise.

**How have you influenced employees to follow your strategic vision for the organization?**

Leaders develop ownership by involving employees in the decision-making and planning process. They provide resources to facilitate employee success and empower employees by devolving authority to get things done efficiently. Effective leaders develop processes that engage employees in achieving the strategic vision.

**How have you encouraged learning and development of employees?**

Learning happens at every opportunity. A candidate's answers to leadership interview questions like this should demonstrate that effective leaders develop employees by mentoring, coaching and providing performance feedback on a daily basis. Leaders act as models for their employees but the most effective leaders not only teach by example they take a personal interest in the learning of others and serve as mentors. Additionally they manage learning throughout the organization by continually focusing attention on the learning agenda and providing the resources to facilitate it. Finally leaders monitor learning by getting regular feedback.

**What was the most significant change you brought about in an organization?**

Leaders can recognize new opportunities and anticipate long term opportunities. They determine new business directions for the organization. They are able to create enthusiasm and acceptance of the new vision or change and use the appropriate leadership style to inspire and guide employees to embrace change.

The question focuses on eliciting what the candidates' concept of leadership means to them. They should be looking back over their experiences and select insightful examples of how they have demonstrated the competencies associated with leadership.