

# VISIONSPARK LEADERSHIP INTERVIEW GUIDE

VisionSpark

5990 Venture Drive, Suite D.  
Dublin, OH 43017

## WHO IS VISIONSPARK?

VisionSpark is an experienced executive search firm that recruits and identifies qualified candidates for our clients' open positions. Our approach includes a comprehensive role description, detailed assessments, mental aptitude and personality testing, and a thoughtful, strategic interview process.

Hiring is an investment. Selecting the wrong candidate can cost your company hours of wasted time and three to 15 times that person's annual salary. Our proven process has a 99% success rate and an average placement tenure of eight years.

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**95%** | **1/400**

**ONLY ONE IN THE LAST 400 EXECUTIVES HIRED  
WITH OUR SYSTEM HAS BEEN FIRED IN THE FIRST YEAR**

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## THE IMPORTANCE OF THE INTERVIEW

The interview is one of the most important and fundamental parts of hiring. The questions you ask as an interviewer are as critical as the candidate's answers. So it's important that you and your team are armed with an approach and strategy that results in a successful hiring decision.

The VisionSpark Leadership Interview Guide is designed to help both experienced and inexperienced interviewers evaluate candidates for management roles at any level in an organization.

The Guide is broken down into three parts:

- (1) **An overview of legal pitfalls in interviewing.** Knowing what NOT to ask a candidate during an interview is as important as knowing what you CAN ask. We'll give you topics, categories and questions to avoid.
- (2) **Interview tips.** We'll provide you with suggestions for forming questions, instruct you on how to prepare for the interview, and how to probe for more information.
- (3) **10 structured sample interview and follow-up questions.** We'll give you examples of our research-based interview questions that you can customize to your business and position.

Interview questions are designed to gain important information about the candidate's experience, personality and organizational fit. The questions are written in the descriptive situational style, an interview strategy that requires an interviewee to give real life examples. Typically, as the interviewer you would begin your question by stating, "Tell me about a time when..." Perhaps you are concerned about an applicant's communication ability. Here is one way to probe:

- + **"Are you a good communicator?"**
- + **"Why do you believe so?"**
- + **"Are you stronger verbally or in writing?"**
- + **"Why do you think so?"**
- + **"Tell me about a time when a breakdown in communication created a difficult situation for you."**

If the candidate does not provide a specific example, tell them "I am beginning to understand you as a communicator. However, can you please provide a specific example?"

This guide should just be one part of your evaluation process. At VisionSpark, we utilize a process that consists of behavior interviews, descriptive situational interviews, a cognitive assessment, personality assessment and team interviews. Your process should be repeatable and all interviewers should be held accountable to use the same process. This allows for more consistent evaluations of talent, which will lead to fewer costly hiring mistakes and less turnover.

# 01.

## LEGAL PITFALLS

# LEGAL PITFALLS IN INTERVIEWING - DO NOT ASK

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In conducting an employment interview, it is the responsibility of the interviewer to discover all he/she can about the interviewee. However, this information must be job related. There are extensive federal and state laws that prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, marital status, pregnancy, age, veteran status, disability or genetic information. Therefore, **DO NOT ASK** questions related to:

Therefore, **DO NOT ASK** any questions regarding:

- place of birth
- birthplace of parents and/or other relatives
- wife or mother's maiden name
- height or weight
- disability or genetic information
- home renter or owner
- club memberships
- military service discharge status
- automobile ownership
- arrest record
- number of children
- marital status
- future marriage plans
- pregnancy
- future plans for having children
- child care needs/problems
- employment of spouse
- future career/job plans of spouse
- church attendance
- political party affiliation

# 02.

## INTERVIEW TIPS

# INTERVIEW TIPS

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**(1) Situational Questions**

Use hypothetical situations, "What would you do if....?"

**(2) Here I Am...**

Do not ask an interviewee for his/her weaknesses.

Instead, ask for an example of an area in which they are striving to improve.

**(3) Apples & Oranges**

Have the interviewee compare and contrast something for you.

**(4) Silence Is Golden**

Do not ask the next question too quickly and use Silence Is Golden to get more information.

**(5) Prove It To Me**

Whenever an interviewee makes a claim, ask for an example.

**(6) Pete Repeat**

Repeat back to the interviewee his/her last word or phrase.

**(7) Two Step Waltz**

Always follow up a how question with a why question.

**(8) Left-Right Jab**

Use closed-ended questions as transitions.

## GETTING STARTED

- Prepare interview questions in advance and practice reading them.
- Review the Position Profile or relevant job description prior to the interviews.
- Take good notes.
- Listen. (The candidate should be speaking 90% of the time.)

## CONDUCTING THE TEAM INTERVIEW

- A designated team leader will make the introductions.
- Briefly describe for the candidate how the interview will be conducted.
- In team interviews each member should have a prepared list of questions. The team leader will be responsible for asking the first question. It is a best practice to have each members role defined in advance to ensure a professional flow to the interview.
- Give the candidate the last 15 minutes to ask his/her questions.
- Thank the candidate for his/her time and adjourn the session.

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## INTERVIEW QUESTIONS



# SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

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1. Please take 2 or 3 minutes and tell us what you most would like us to know about you.

What do you enjoy most about being in a leadership role in a company?

When you consider a position with a new company, what are you most looking for in the company?

2. Looking back on your career, who has had the most influence on you?

Why?

3. Describe the best supervisor you ever had.

How would you characterize your ideal supervisor?

What would be his/her management style?

# SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

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4. Describe a complex situation in which you had to learn a lot, quickly. How did you go about learning, and how successful were the outcomes?
  
5. Letting people know how they are doing is a key responsibility of a manager in our company. Please tell us about a specific time when you discussed a team member's performance with them.

How did the team member respond?

6. Let's assume you feel strongly about a certain issue. You know that I don't agree with you. In fact, you know that I feel very strongly about my position. What would you do?

What will you do if I challenge your ideas, your proposals, or your suggestions?

7. Give us an example of a time you went above and beyond what was normally expected to enhance your company's reputation or image.

# SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

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## 8. Please describe your problem analysis skills.

Do those who know you best regard you as one who diligently pursues every detail, or do you tend to be more broad brush?

Why?

Please give us an example of digging more deeply for facts than what was asked of you.

## 9. This is a key position for our company's future. How do you believe you can contribute to our growth and profitability?

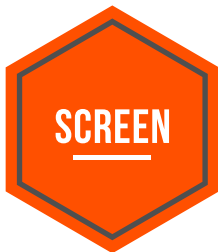
Tell us about a time when you played a key role in increasing profitability for a company.

## 10. Tell us about a time when your listening skills enabled you to help someone solve a problem or resolve an important issue.

What are the keys to an effective listener?

# OUR PROCESS

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Brainstorm the "Who" to better identify your ideal candidate

Basis for position profile

Discern your culture, mission, vision, values

Creates buy-in with all stakeholders

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Position Profile defines more clearly your "A" player

Lens for interviewing candidates

Sourcing: Casts a large net to get as many qualified applicants as possible

Score the résumés

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Researched questions with a weighted response guide enables us to measure "job fit" of each candidate

Evaluates candidates on 8-12 success traits

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Online behavioral assessment evaluating mental aptitudes and personality dimensions against pre-determined performance benchmarks

Match the candidate to Position Success Traits

Assessment results can be used to enhance the onboarding and developmental process

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VisionSpark provides behavioral interviewing questions to better prepare the stakeholder's selection team

Schedule of interviews provided gives you structure and organizes the day

Preparation: Thorough review of top candidates held prior to interview day

Debrief held after interviews to get all stakeholder's input

Identifying the right candidate for your open position is a process that takes time, patience and careful planning. The interview is a crucial part of learning how well your candidate will fit in your organization's culture. By following the suggestions and tips in this guide, you will be better prepared to make an informed hiring decision.

If you have further questions or would like assistance in your hiring process, contact VisionSpark at **614-389-3375**.