



Sample Core Values Interview Questions

Please note that these are in no way magical questions that will test for specific behaviors with 100% accuracy. You will not truly know how someone will behave until they are put in the situation. However, you should be able to increase your chances of hiring for cultural and team fit by asking a few of these for each of your Core Values.

Combining these with skill questions should provide a more complete understanding of the person and his/her ability to fit into the culture and have the minimal level of skills to do the job. This is not an exhaustive list of all possible Core Values. This should give you a head start on hiring for fit as well as technical skill!

1. Integrity

- 1.1. Please define “integrity.” What does it mean to you in the workplace?
- 1.2. Have you ever been put in a situation where doing the right thing would make you look bad? Tell me about how you handled it./ Have you ever faced an ethical dilemma at work? If so, what was the issue and what did you do?
- 1.3. If you saw a coworker doing something that would hurt the company, what would you do? Has this ever happened to you? Please explain. What would you do if you saw a colleague stealing stationary from the company’s stock?
- 1.4. If you knew your manager was doing something unethical, how would you handle it?
- 1.5. What would you do if you were asked to do something that went against your values?
- 1.6. How would you handle a situation where you made a big mistake, but you were the only one who knew about it?
- 1.7. Describe an initiative in which you participated that was unsuccessful. Why did it fail and how did you learn from it?

2. Respect

- 2.1. How do you manage conflict with coworkers?
- 2.2. What role does kindness/empathy/humor play at work?
- 2.3. Give an example of a time when you saw a team achieve something great because of its diversity.
- 2.4. How should you correct someone if you see them make a mistake or if you see a way they can get better?
- 2.5. Tell me about a time when you made a special effort to treat another person in a way which showed your respect for the other's feelings.
- 2.6. How do you show respect to others?
- 2.7. When do you feel respected by others?

3. Innovation



- 3.1. Describe a situation where you were facing a technical issue and your normal troubleshooting method wasn't working. What did you do?
- 3.2. Can you give me an example of a well-designed product? What features make this product unique?
- 3.3. How do you feel when given a new project with no obvious solution?
- 3.4. Tell me about a time when you thought of a better way to do something.
- 3.5. In your opinion, what's the greatest innovation in history?
- 3.6. What's the best idea you've ever had?
- 3.7. What do you believe are the keys to being innovative?
- 3.8. If you met our CEO for half an hour, what future opportunities would you suggest to him/her?

4. Teamwork

- 4.1. Give me an example of a time when you picked up the slack for a team member.
- 4.2. What was the situation and why did you do it?
- 4.3. How do you define Teamwork?
- 4.4. How do you define success for a team?
- 4.5. Tell me about a time when competition brought out the best or worst in a team.
- 4.6. What is the best team you have ever seen and what made them great?
- 4.7. What is the worst team you have ever seen and what made them the worst?
- 4.8. How do you make people feel welcome and comfortable in a new situation?
- 4.9. Give an example of a time when you saw a team achieve something great because of its diversity.
- 4.10. What is the most unfair thing you have ever seen someone do at work?
- 4.11. What did you do about it?
- 4.12. You are a new person joining an established work team. What specific actions do you take to become part of the team?
- 4.13. How should you correct someone if you see them making a mistake or if you see a way they can get better?
- 4.14. What role does kindness/empathy/humor play at work?
- 4.15. How do you manage conflict with coworkers?
- 4.16. What one thing about you would you leverage or change to be a better teammate?

5. Excellence

- 5.1. Your manager or supervisor schedules you with more work than you feel like you can get done in the time-frame they require. What actions do you take?
- 5.2. Give me an example of a time when you eliminated waste from a process or product.
- 5.3. How did you implement the change and what was the result?
- 5.4. What is the most unfair thing you have ever seen someone do at work?



- 5.5. What did you do about it?
- 5.6. Describe an initiative in which you participated that was unsuccessful. Why did it fail and how did you learn from it?

6. Customer Focus

- 6.1. Describe a time you managed to calm an irate customer. How did you manage to maintain your professionalism and address their complaint?
- 6.2. How would you reply to a customer who enters the store or calls just as your shift ends?
- 6.3. Describe the last time you received remarkable service as a customer. What was it that made the service remarkable to you?
- 6.4. Is the customer always right, why or why not?
- 6.5. Would you rather have 100 customers that stuck with you forever or 1,000 customers with less customer loyalty?
- 6.6. Give me an example of a product or service that you would never switch away from.
- 6.7. What makes it that way?
- 6.8. If you found out we were going to miss an important deadline for a customer, describe how you would handle the issue.
- 6.9. Describe how you go about learning about and understanding a customer's needs.
- 6.10. What role does kindness/empathy/humor play at work?
- 6.11. Is the customer always right? If no, please give an example and describe how you would handle the situation.

7. Trust/Ethics

- 7.1. What is the most unfair thing you have ever seen someone do at work?
- 7.2. What did you do about it?
- 7.3. If someone on your team made a mistake, how would you handle it?
- 7.4. How should you correct someone if you see them making a mistake or if you see a way they can get better?
- 7.5. What do you believe compromises the ethical workplace?
- 7.6. Share with me a time when trust was tested for you?

8. Diversity

- 8.1. Give an example of a time when you saw a team achieve something great because of its diversity.
- 8.2. What role does kindness/empathy/humor play at work?
- 8.3. If you were asked to head up a team to tackle a difficult and complex problem, how would you go about choosing the team?
- 8.4. What do you see as the most challenging aspect of working in a diverse environment?
- 8.5. What steps have you taken to meet this challenge?



- 8.6. Describe what kinds of experiences you have had interacting with others that have different back grounds than your own.
- 8.7. What are some examples of ways that you have incorporated diverse or underrepresented populations into your planning or decision-making?
- 8.8. How have you handled a situation when a colleague was unreceptive to the diversity of others?

9. Accountability

- 9.1. Describe a successful team project you worked on so far. What was your contribution?
- 9.2. How would you react if your team received negative feedback about a part of the project that was entirely assigned to you?
- 9.3. How would you handle a situation where you made a big mistake, but you were the only one who knew about it?
- 9.4. Describe an initiative in which you participated that was unsuccessful. Why did it fail and how did you learn from it?
- 9.5. Tell me about a time when despite careful planning, things got out of hand or did not work out and what did you do
- 9.6. Tell me about an occasion when you chose, for whatever reason, not to finish a particular task?
- 9.7. Tell me about a time your supervisor was absent and you had to make a decision?
- 9.8. Describe the difference for you between accountability and responsibility.

10. Openness/Adaptability

- 10.1. What is most important to you in the workplace? Why?
- 10.2. Are you flexible when it comes to workplace changes? Describe a time when you adapted to change.
- 10.3. Tell me about a time when you were unable to adapt in the workplace. Why?
- 10.4. What are some negatives to change that you've encountered in your job?
- 10.5. Tell me about them.
- 10.6. Have you ever had to change a project around at the last minute?
- 10.7. What did you do?
- 10.8. How did it work out?
- 10.9. Tell me about a situation you wished you had handled differently based on the outcome.
- 10.10. What was the situation?
- 10.11. What would you change when faced with a similar situation in the future?
- 10.12. Give an example of a time when you saw a team achieve something great because of its diversity.
- 10.13. How would you go about encouraging acceptance or support with someone you felt was close-minded about an issue?
- 10.14. What role does kindness/empathy/humor play at work?



11. Quality

- 11.1. Is it better to do something until 100% complete or 90% in a lot less time?
- 11.2. How do you balance quality of work with budget and deadline responsibilities?
- 11.3. Is there ever a good time to take a shortcut on a project?
- 11.4. How would you decide?
- 11.5. Your manager or supervisor schedules you with more work than you feel like you can get done in the time frame they require.
- 11.6. What actions do you take?
- 11.7. For what reasons would you push out a delivery date for a project?
- 11.8. What comes to mind when you hear the word quality?

12. Honesty

- 12.1. What would you do if a client came to you with an issue you didn't know how to address?
- 12.2. Your manager or supervisor schedules you with more work than you feel like you can get done in the time frame they require.
- 12.3. What actions do you take?
- 12.4. Tell me about the time when you spoke up within a situation that was unfavorable to you.
- 12.5. How do you earn the trust of others?
- 12.6. What was the most difficult thing that you had to tackle in your professional life and
- 12.7. What all measures did you take for solving that issue?

13. Passion/Dedication

- 13.1. Tell me about a time you became disengaged at work. What happened
- 13.2. Describe your ideal working environment.
- 13.3. Have you ever had to deal with employees who repeatedly ignored your safety instructions? How did you resolve this?
- 13.4. Tell me about a time you missed an incident of serious negligence. What happened?
- 13.5. Describe the most dangerous violation you have ever encountered.
- 13.6. Have you ever had to stop a process because of the danger of imminent accidents?

14. Safety

- 14.1. Describe your ideal working environment. o
- 14.2. Have you ever had to deal with employees who repeatedly ignored your safety instructions? How did you resolve this?
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15. Community/Social Responsibility

15.1. How do you keep a balance between performing thorough quality controls on products while keeping costs low?

15.2. What company policies would you suggest creating to make our operations more environmentally-friendly?

15.3. How would you ensure employees understand and apply these guidelines?

15.4. Would you implement a change in our organization that was better for the environment, but worse for our growth?

15.5. How would you go about making the decision?

15.6. How do you incorporate different stakeholders into your decision-making? Specifically, society and the environment (if not mentioned).

16. Service

16.1. Describe the last time you received remarkable service as a customer.

16.2. What was it that made the service remarkable to you?

16.3. Describe a time you were happiest and most productive at work. What responsibilities were you doing?

16.4. Where do you see yourself in five years?

16.5. Tell me about an achievement that was difficult to reach. How did you accomplish it?

16.6. Have you ever taken the initiative to learn something new for a job? Tell me about it.

16.7. What gets you excited about coming to work?

17. Collaboration

17.1. Do you prefer to work alone or with a team? Why?

17.2. Tell me about a time you disagreed with your teammates. What happened?

17.3. Describe a time when you had to work with someone you didn't get along with. What did you do? Did things go smoothly?

17.4. Describe your ideal teammate. Have you ever worked with someone who embodied these characteristics? Tell me about your experience?

17.5. What role do you typically take on while working with a team? Give me an example project around at the last minute? What did you do? How did it work out?

17.6. Describe a time your team failed to complete a project on time. What would you do differently, if you had the chance?

17.7. How would you go about encouraging acceptance or support with someone you felt was close-minded about an issue?

17.8. If you saw a way for us to improve our service to our customers, how would you go about getting people on-board with the change



18. Responsibility

- 18.1. Have you ever had to juggle more projects than you had time for? How did you prioritize?
- 18.2. Tell me about a time when you had to pass your work onto a coworker because you couldn't meet deadlines. What did you learn from the experience?
- 18.3. Describe a time when you were late for an important meeting. What happened?
- 18.4. Tell me about a time when a coworker's work was passed onto you. Were you able to get the work done? What was your reaction to the situation?
- 18.5. If you made a mistake that could cost you your job and nobody knew it was you, what would you do?
- 18.6. How would you define being "on-time" for work?
- 18.7. Your manager or supervisor schedules you with more work than you feel like you can get done in the time frame they require. What actions do you take?
- 18.8. Describe an initiative in which you participated that was unsuccessful.
- 18.9. Why did it fail and how did you learn from it?
- 18.10. How do you handle stress or tight deadlines?

19. Responsibility

- 19.1. What do you do when you do not know the answer?
- 19.2. What would you do if a client came to you with an issue you didn't know how to address?
- 19.3. Describe a situation where you had made a mistake to others and how did you handle such a situation?
- 19.4. You have been struggling to solve a problem and you are going to get some help from your manager. How do you do it and what do you say?
- 19.5. What would you do if a teammate completely disagreed with your solution that you had been working on for months?
- 19.6. Who is the humblest person you know and how would you describe that trait of theirs to others?
- 19.7. If there was a critical problem to solve in a group that you were leading and you believed you had the solution, how would you describe an ideal outcome of that discussion?

20. People/Communication

- 20.1. How would you describe your communication skills?
- 20.2. How important are communication skills to you in the workplace?
- 20.3. Tell me about a time when a miscommunication resulted in a setback.
- 20.4. What did you do? What did you learn from the situation?
- 20.5. Describe a situation where you needed to convey an idea to a coworker.
- 20.6. What did you do to get your point across? Were there any setbacks along the way?



- 20.7. Tell me about a time when you had to sell an idea or opinion to someone in the workplace (e.g., boss, coworkers, or customers). What was the result?
- 20.8. Give an example of a time when you saw a team achieve something great because of its diversity.
- 20.9. How would you go about encouraging acceptance or support with someone you felt was close-minded about an issue?
- 20.10. What is your preferred communication style? Why do you prefer it?

21. Commitment/Growth

- 21.1. How does someone become the best at what they do?
- 21.2. How do you overcome resistance when working through a difficult problem?
- 21.3. When you feel overwhelmed by the amount of work that needs to be done, how do you keep moving forward and making progress?
- 21.4. Give me an example of a time when competition made you a stronger person.
- 21.5. What do you do to keep your job knowledge current and cutting edge?
- 21.6. How would you go about developing the skills of a brand new person on your team with little experience?
- 21.7. Describe a time when you stuck with something or someone through a difficult spot.
- 21.8. How and why did you do this?
- 21.9. How do you get better at your job? What motivates you to do so?
- 21.10. Describe an initiative in which you participated that was unsuccessful.
- 21.11. Why did it fail and how did you learn from it?



Other Values Questions - General Culture

1. “Tell me something you have taught yourself in the last six months.”

21.12. Early in his career at Google, CEO Eric Schmidt realized that the best predictor of a candidate’s success wasn’t necessarily their pedigree or technical know-how. What mattered most was whether they possessed two hugely important soft skills: persistence and curiosity.

“The combination of persistence and curiosity is a very good predictor of employee success in a knowledge economy,” says Eric.

These skills happen to align nicely with some of Google’s core values—what they call their “ten things we know to be true”—including “there’s always more information out there” and “great just isn’t good enough.” When you can find a candidate with the right combination of soft skills and who also aligns with your culture and values, you’ve probably got a keeper.

Curiosity isn’t easy to gauge in an interview, but it’s definitely possible with the right questions and a little practice. To start with, try asking candidates about something they’ve recently taught themselves, or give them a pre-interview assignment with a research component, then have them talk through their process with you. Of course, you can also turn the interview on them, measuring their curiosity based on the kinds of questions they choose to ask you.

2. “One year from now, if you’re part of the team at XYZ, how will you judge if your time here has been a success?”

At ThirdLove, an online bra purveyor co-founded by former Google marketer Heidi Zak, the company’s leaders quickly realized that locating candidates who shared their core values was a much better predictor than hard skills or experience.

But they couldn’t just ask leading questions with obvious answers—e.g., “Are you responsible at work?” So Heidi worked backwards, developing interview questions that test for specific soft skills that directly relate to the company’s core values, including positivity and an ability to adapt to change.

Like Google, ThirdLove also considers curiosity to be among its top values. To measure curiosity in candidates, Heidi asks: “One year from now, if you’re part of the team at ThirdLove, how will you judge if your time here has been a success?” There’s no specific right or wrong answer, but Heidi is looking for candidates who focus on growth and learning new things, rather than individual accomplishments. She knows these candidates will make great leaders because they share the same goals and focus as the company’s top executives.

3. “What has shaped you, regardless of your school or occupation?”



You might be noticing a pattern: when it comes to sussing out a candidates' alignment with core values, many interviewers skip right past work-related questions. For example, at Ikea—where values, fit, and communication are prized above credentials and accomplishments—Marilyn Schroder, the Manager of Recruitment, asks questions that illuminate the candidate's authentic personality.

Inspired by its rich, Swedish corporate culture, Ikea's core values include humbleness, willpower, and a constant desire for renewal.

To learn more about candidates' values, Marilyn zips right past the resume: "What has shaped you, regardless of your school or occupation?" she asks. The question forces the candidate to exclude career and education experience and reflect on experiences that reveal their character outside of the workplace.

"Every human being develops certain values over the course of his or her life," Schroeder said. "The more [their] values match those of Ikea, the greater the likelihood that a new employee will actually be happy with us."

To make sure she's hiring the right people, Marilyn makes the interview more of a dialogue than an intense grilling session. After all, the ideal candidate isn't just someone who's qualified for the job—they should also feel that the role and company culture are a good fit for their own careers. "The application is not a question-and-answer game," says Marilyn. "We hope that applicants will understand it as a meeting process and be authentic, so that we can work together to find out whether the job is right for them."

4. "Does that make sense?"

According to a LinkedIn survey of U.S. hiring managers, communication is the most in-demand soft skill for candidates. Fortunately, communication also one of the easiest skills to measure in an interview—but only if you give your candidate an opportunity. For Josh Millet, CEO and founder of Criteria Corp, one of the most important questions he asks during interviews is "Does that make sense?" It's a question that requires him to pause his own train of thought for a moment to see whether the candidate is actively listening—and whether they can understand and synthesize what he's been telling them.

If the candidate's impulse is to respond with a simple, terse "yes," they're probably not going to score high marks.

"The real purpose of this question is to probe your active listening skills," says Josh. "In other words, how well can you summarize what I've just said, and how attuned are you to understanding my needs as a hiring manager?"

That said, recruiters and hiring managers must be mindful of creating space for the candidate to speak.



“In today’s job-search climate, it’s crucial [for candidates] to master the subtle art of selling your soft skills to a potential employer,” says Josh. “But it’s just as crucial [to] offer candidates a chance to do that. If you don’t know how to look for soft skills, you’ll never find them.”

5. “Tell me about your most significant technical accomplishment, the project that you’re most proud of.”

No matter how much emphasis you place on a candidate’s personality, soft skills, or alignment with company values, you shouldn’t avoid discussing their accomplishments altogether. In fact, the way a job-seeker talks about their past work experiences can tell you a lot about them, as Max Brown learned while recruiting for Tesla.

Max interviewed over 1,000 candidates for technical positions, and he discovered one question that tripped them up over and over again: “Tell me about your most significant technical accomplishment, the project that you’re most proud of.” The question might seem unexceptional—maybe even easy—but it’s actually a great test that reveals whether a candidate possesses the values and skills most important at Tesla, including grit, rigor, and ownership.

Grit can come through in the way they describe their perseverance during a project, and rigor boils down to their technical knowledge of nitty-gritty details. But ownership is most important of all—for Max, it “all goes back to how personally instrumental [the candidate was] in a project’s outcome.”

Tons of candidates make the same mistake—they describe a major project they worked on that sounds super impressive, but after a series of follow-up questions, is revealed to be something they only played a small part in.

In fact, one of the most impressive candidate responses was about a pen cap—an unsexy product, but one that the candidate owned through and through.

“He presented the pen cap as an example of his personal expertise, which was plastics design,” says Max. “Our engineers left the interview impressed by the knowledge the candidate was able to display in his field.”

Just as candidates are looking for ways to show off their personalities and soft skills, recruiters must find way new and effective ways to gauge whether a candidate aligns with the company’s core values. Not only will values-focused interview questions predict future success, but they can help a candidate determine whether the job is right for them, too.



Other information

Tips to assess candidates' answers

- First, determine the values that your company embraces. All employees, from entry-level to executives, should share these core values.
- Then, define how each value translates into work behaviors. Behavioral and situational questions will help you understand whether candidates demonstrate desirable behaviors on the job.
- Departments or smaller teams might value additional traits. Adjust your questions to evaluate those, as well. For example, a sales team is likely to value solid customer service attitude, while an engineering team might prioritize innovation.
- It's best to combine values-based interview questions with competency-based questions that focus on analyzing skills and knowledge. That way, you'll create complete candidate profiles and reach more objective hiring decisions.

Red flags

- **They can't support their arguments.** During job interviews, most candidates will claim they are "good team players" or having a "strong work ethic." But if they can't give you examples that prove these values, they might be simply floating buzzwords to impress you.
- **Their values don't match the position's requirements.** Employees with an out-of-the-box way of thinking might be great fits for a product development or marketing team that seeks to engage new customers. But, they'll likely be hard to retain in a process-driven company or team.
- **They seem inflexible.** New hires could (try to) adjust to your way of working, as long as they're willing to do so. If, however, they have strong opinions that don't match your core values, that's a red flag for your future collaboration.
- **They show signs of arrogance.** Being negative toward criticism and/or demonstrating a bossy attitude are indicators of people who prioritize their own values over others'. These people mightn't comply with your company policies in the long run and end up creating a toxic work environment.