

A Business Leader's Guide to Hiring an HR Manager

An essential guide that includes sample interview questions for HR Manager candidates and advice on how best to structure your job interviews.

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Getting started

Interviewing your first HR Manager and knowing what questions to ask can be a daunting task.

You want to get it right, you want to set the right impression, but what questions should you actually ask? The stakes are high.

To help you get the most out of your interviews, we've put together the following guide which includes a library of potentially suitable questions.

What kind of questions should I ask HR Manager candidates during a job interview?

The types of questions you might ask an HR professional during an interview will vary depending on the nuances and focus of the HR role you're hiring for.

HR has many different areas which may (or may not) be key to what you need this person to do. These include specialisations such as:

- Employee engagement
- Wellbeing
- Diversity and inclusion
- Employee relations
- Talent acquisition
- Learning and development
- HR analytics and systems
- HR operations
- Reward / compensation & benefits

When hiring an HR Manager where the focus of the role may be fairly broad, understanding 'fit' and how they'll work with you and your leadership team is also critical to understand.



Selecting your Questions

To keep it simple, we've devised the following 'question banks' for you to pick and choose some questions which you might ask.

We'd recommend choosing somewhere between 4-6 questions to complement the wider interview questions you'd usually ask.

GENERALIST HR



Tell me about your previous HR experience. What was your primary responsibility in that role?



How do you ensure that HR policies and procedures are communicated and implemented effectively in the organisation?



How would you describe your style as a HR professional?



Can you provide an example of a complex HR issue you've encountered and how you resolved it? What strategies did you use to address both the immediate problem and its root causes?

TALENT ACQUISITION



What is your approach to recruitment and selection?



How do you ensure that the organisation attracts and hires the right candidates?



Can you describe a time when you had to fill a particularly challenging position? What strategies did you use to identify and attract suitable candidates for this role?



How do you measure the success of your recruitment process?

Selecting your Questions

EMPLOYEE RELATIONS



Can you describe a situation where you had to deal with a difficult employee situation? How did you handle it? Would you do anything differently?



How do you handle conflicts between employees or between employees and management?



Tell us about a time you resolved a conflict at work. What approach did you take, and how did it align with the company's culture?



How do you keep yourself updated with the latest trends in HR? Can you share how continuous learning has impacted your HR approach?

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT



What is your experience with performance management?



How do you help managers and employees improve performance?



Can you share an example of how you have successfully implemented or revised a performance management system in a previous role? What were the key challenges and outcomes?



How do you approach setting performance metrics and goals? And, how do you ensure they align with overall organisational objectives?

Selecting your Questions

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT



How do you ensure that employees are satisfied with their jobs and motivated to perform well?



How do you approach giving and receiving feedback?



Can you share a situation where feedback led to positive change?



What strategies do you use to motivate and engage employees? How do you measure their effectiveness?

HR PROJECT MANAGEMENT / HR SYSTEMS



Can you tell me about a time when you had to implement a new HR programme or initiative? What were the steps you took to ensure its success?



Have you been responsible for championing and bringing about change from a HR technology perspective? What was it? What were the barriers? What was the outcome?



How do you adapt to significant changes in organisational culture or direction? Can you provide an example?



How do you assess the effectiveness of current HR systems and processes in an organisation? And, can you give an example of how you have identified and implemented improvements in these areas?

Selecting your Questions

LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT



Can you tell me about how you approach learning and development / training initiatives in your organisation. Where do you start? What do you prioritise?



Experience with Learning and Development Programs: Can you describe your experience in developing and implementing learning and development programs? How did you tailor these programs to meet the diverse needs of employees at different levels?



Measuring the Impact of Training Initiatives: How do you evaluate the effectiveness of training programs? Can you share an example of how you measured the ROI (Return on Investment) of a particular training initiative?



Adapting Training to Organisational Changes: In a rapidly changing business environment, how do you ensure that training and development programs remain relevant and aligned with the company's evolving goals and challenges?

Selecting your Questions

WELLBEING, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION



What measures do you take to ensure that your colleagues have the support and practical help they need in order to be happy and productive in the workplace?



Can you tell me about a time where you championed diversity and inclusion. What was the context? What was the ultimate outcome?



How do you ensure inclusivity in the workplace?



How do you balance high productivity with ensuring employees maintain a healthy work-life balance?

REWARD



What experiences have you had dealing with remuneration and salary reviews?



Have you ever been involved in designing a new bonus or benefits package? What were the challenges of getting that through to fruition?



Can you describe your experience in developing and implementing compensation strategies? How did you ensure they were competitive and aligned with the organisation's goals?



Tell us about a time when you had to address a pay equity issue or a significant discrepancy in compensation within a team. How did you handle it, and what was the outcome?

Selecting your Questions

CULTURAL FIT



How would your last manager / leader describe you? What would they say in regards to your strengths? What would they say about areas where you need support or help to be at your best?



From your previous experiences, describe the 'best' culture you've worked in? What made it special for you?



How do you define a healthy workplace culture, and how have you contributed to creating or maintaining such a culture in your previous roles?



Can you give an example of a time when your personal values were challenged at work? How did you handle it?

This is by no means an exhaustive list of all the questions you could ask an HR Manager but hopefully it gives you an idea of the areas you could focus on.

However, your questions will obviously be dependent on what you've outlined in the Job Description as important for the role.

So re-reading those points in advance is also a great reminder on what you actually need this person to do!



Structuring your Interviews

When hiring an HR professional, it's likely that there will be at least two interview stages and more than one person involved in the process.

It's therefore important for all stakeholders to understand the role they play within the process, and the areas they need to explore with the candidate.

One person might be responsible for assessing cultural fit, whilst another might take a deeper dive into the candidate's technical competencies.



✓ **START WITH AN INTRODUCTION**

Begin by introducing yourself and your company. Give a brief overview of your company's culture, values, and mission, and provide some context as to why you are hiring for this role.

You'll also want to outline what the candidate can expect during the interview, how long the interview will last and what will happen at the end of the meeting.

From a candidate's perspective, there's nothing more frustrating than having to repeat their experience 3 or 4 times when meeting different stakeholders from the same business.

It demonstrates a lack of planning and organisation on the business's part and would present an instant red-flag to a candidate.

So, how should you structure a standard job interview?



Structuring your Interviews



ASK OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

Start the interview with open-ended questions to get a better understanding of the candidate's current situation, experience and skills. Try to avoid answering the question for them and give them the freedom to talk.



USE BEHAVIOURAL QUESTIONS

Behavioural questions (or competency questions) are designed to assess how a candidate has handled specific situations in the past.

For example, you could ask the candidate to describe how they have resolved a conflict between two employees, or how they have dealt with a difficult termination. This will give you an insight into how they handle challenging situations and their problem-solving skills.



ASSESS THEIR COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Communication is a critical skill for an HR professional, as they are generally responsible for coaching your leadership team, mediating conflicts, and communicating policies and procedures to employees.



EVALUATE CULTURAL FIT

Consider your company culture and values and ask the candidate questions that will help you assess whether they would be a good fit. This is generally quite a subjective area to assess and typically benefits from the input of several team members when deciding either way.



ALLOW TIME FOR QUESTIONS

At the end of the interview, give the candidate an opportunity to ask questions. This will help you gauge their level of interest in the position and allow them to raise any concerns that they may have.

Structuring your **Interviews**



RECONFIRM THE ROLE & OPPORTUNITY

Don't forget to 'sell' your role and company to the candidate! All too often in an interview scenario, employers forget the all-important balance between establishing if the interviewee is the right fit, and that it's also imperative they also ensure they communicate the positive attributes of their role and company. Why would somebody want this role? Leave them wanting a next stage interview!

We hope this guide has helped shape your thinking for your next interview with an HR Manager candidate.

If you have any further questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to us.

GOOD LUCK!



CONVEY NEXT STEPS

Your candidates will want to know what happens following the interview, so make sure you communicate the next steps. Will you be considering other applicants? When can they expect to hear from you? Will there be another stage to the process? Being transparent with candidates is really important for building trust and managing expectations.

