



**TECHNOLOGY
INTERVIEW GUIDE
FOR EMPLOYERS
2020**



AN INTRODUCTION TO TECHNOLOGY INTERVIEWS



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AND STAFFING**

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Whether you're looking to fill a variety of positions or just one, the interview is a critical step that can cause employers a notable amount of stress. With the high costs involved in recruiting and the strain that can result from the possibility of making an erroneous selection, companies want to ensure they are doing everything possible to hire the right people for their team.

At **LRO Staffing**, our team of technology recruitment specialists have worked with hundreds of clients to develop strategies to guide them through the interview process and select the right candidates to meet the needs of their growing enterprises.

When it comes to designing an interview protocol, more than anything else, we recommend that employers focus on providing a solid structure that maintains uniformity across candidates. The hiring team needs to be able to compare and contrast each applicant adequately using established criteria that can be referred back to during their review.

When hiring in the technology sector, employers must first determine that candidates have the prerequisite technical skills required for the role. Following this, they need to probe further to discover which applicant is going to function best within their existing company framework and help take the team to the next level.

In this guide, we will explore our process for interviewing technology sector candidates in both a virtual or face-to-face environment. With COVID-19 currently restricting regular interviewing practices, employers are forced to re-imagine their hiring process and rely on video conferencing software to conduct meetings virtually. This however, does not impact the overall format, strategy and questions to be asked of a potential candidate. We will look at how to define the role, how to position it to encourage the right applicants to accept the position, the basics of personality/skills assessment, and finally, how to do a reasonable evaluation, followed by a clear decision.



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MAKE APPLICANTS FEEL WELCOME

Interviews are inherently stressful. Applicants are quite literally asking someone to judge their skills, their personality, and to decide they're the best of the group. Many well-seasoned professionals start to feel their nerves acting up the moment they walk into an interview situation, and that makes it difficult to put your best foot forward.

When a candidate arrives for an interview, whether virtual or in-person, try not to keep them waiting. Be sure that you smile, introduce yourself, and thank them for coming. Although the power dynamic often favours the employer, you also want your top choice to be excited to work for your company. Making them feel welcome from the start helps to create an environment where they can envision themselves working.

BRINGING THE COMPANY TO LIFE

Once you have the candidate and the interview team settled, we recommend going through a proper introduction of the company. Talk to them about the history, the corporate culture, and why employees like working for the organization. Not only will this help put your candidate more at ease, but it will help you to sell them on the position. Always remember that both parties have to agree to work together.

For technology positions, it's also great to talk about your company's innovations and some areas where the business is interested in developing. By discussing successes, you position the company as dynamic, and by discussing future aspirations, you allow the applicant to see where they might fit in as part of the team.

If there are regular staff events to build camaraderie, a focus on providing career development opportunities, or even perks like an office chef—talking about them upfront can also assist you in selling the company to an applicant.

DEFINE THE ROLE

Even though you've crafted your job description intending to provide enough information to attract qualified candidates, it's essential to go over the details of the position again at the start of the interview to help bring it all together. By talking through the finer points of the job, you can connect the technical skills expected with the team and supplier relationships that may be required to succeed in the role. While most candidates will have the necessary coding or technical abilities, they may not have considered the unique interpersonal elements your company may expect of them.

Additionally, having a member of the hiring team explain the position serves a natural transition from the welcome into the more formal portion of the interview.

THE EVALUATION STRUCTURE

After you've outlined the position, you will then proceed to the more formally structured section of the interview. To guarantee that you get the best out of each candidate, you want to make them feel as relaxed as possible by outlining each of the steps you'll be following. Let them know that the team will be taking notes for reference, but should they want to go back to a specific question later and elaborate on their answer, they are welcome to do so.

It is essential to the hiring process that the interview is conducted similarly for each candidate. By establishing a defined set of questions beforehand, you will be able to assign a score and take notes that will allow the hiring team to review and discuss each candidate effectively after all of the interviews have finished.

The trouble with more free-flowing interviews is that they tend to bias candidates who are more like the people conducting the interview. With a structured set of questions, the team can better put aside their personal feelings and compare applicants based on their suitability for the job.

DIVIDING THE INTERVIEW SECTIONS

When your team is conducting interviews, you need to accomplish a few fundamental goals. First, you have to warrant that the applicant has the technical abilities to do the job at the level required. The next thing is to determine that they have a high enough level of Emotional intelligence (sometimes called Emotional quotient or EQ) to work with the team and manage the stress and demands of the job in a way that won't compromise their co-workers or the quality of the work.

We recommend splitting the interview into two distinct sections and talking to the candidate about the differences before you begin. Often the best way to start is with the Personality section. By opening with questions about who they are and how they interact with others, it will often help them relax into the discussion. And, once you've finished that assessment, you can typically move more fluidly onto the specific Technical section while maintaining a relaxed atmosphere.

KEEPING SCORE

If you've been successful with your job posting, you should have a shortlist of at least three candidates that you want to interview for a given role. As mentioned above, you need to have a method for noting and reviewing applicant responses, with the hiring team, after the completion of all the interviews.

To accomplish this, we recommend creating a question spreadsheet. To begin, list out each of your questions for both the Technical and Personality sections of the interview. The next column will be for keeping score. Many interviewers like to use a five-point scale, which we will expand on below, but the important thing is that each member of the hiring committee understand what each number means. The final column will be for expanded notes. Beyond the score, each committee member should make a note of any highlights or concerns stemming from the applicant's answer. After the conclusion of all the interviews, the evaluation spreadsheets can be shared among the hiring team before reassembling to discuss the rankings.

THE FIVE-POINT SCALE

5 Ranking - Great Response: The candidate provided a comprehensive answer to the question. They demonstrated a considerable understanding of the topic and their response was well thought out and complete without additional probing.

2-4 Ranking - Good Response: The candidate gave a satisfactory reply to the question. Their understanding of the topic was equal to or slightly less than what the job requires. Some further questioning may have been needed to get them to answer the question thoroughly.

2 -1 Ranking - Poor Response: The candidate did not provide an acceptable answer to this question. Their response communicated a lack of experience/expertise expected for this position.



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PERSONALITY QUESTIONS FOR TECH CANDIDATES

There are a wide variety of personality assessments available on the market, and each of them provides slightly different insights into the character of an individual. However, when building a set of personality questions of your own, we recommend starting with the "What you say about others," approach, supported by [research](#) from [Wake Forest University](#). The findings show that "How positively you see others is linked to how happy, kind-hearted, and emotionally stable you are. In contrast, negative perceptions of others are linked to higher levels of narcissism and antisocial behaviour."

THE QUESTIONS

Can you talk to us about your closest friend, and what you like most about them?

As the Wake Forest University research asserted, the way they speak about the people closest to them will provide you with insights as to how they view the world and how they interact with others generally.

What can you tell me about your last supervisor, what did you appreciate about their management style, and what would you do differently?

Again, pay attention to how they speak about their direct supervisor to get an insight into how they will function on a team. Even if they have differences in how they would approach a leadership position, pay careful attention to the tone and words used to explain how their method would vary.

Can you tell us what you think of {INSERT a Competitors Product}?

How tactfully they address the competition can tell you a lot about who they are as a professional. And, if they are willing to disparage a competitor completely, what might they be saying about your product if they interview elsewhere?

Can you talk to us a bit about your proudest non-work achievement?

With this question, you are trying to get them to open up about who they are as a person and what they value outside of the office.

What is your biggest failure, and what did you learn from it?

It can be challenging for professionals to talk about the things that went wrong. However, often it's the products that didn't work that provide the most significant opportunity for growth. Understanding how a candidate accepted the outcome and learned from it gives a pretty comprehensive insight into their abilities to cope with challenges.

Can you tell us about a personal hero?

The people we aspire to be more like are a good indication of what we value. If an applicant is vague in their response, be sure you ask them to explain why they chose who they did.

What irritates you the most?

Understanding what bothers people can be just as enlightening as knowing what motivates them. However, you want to pay close attention to whether their irritants will help your team solve problems, or be a problem for the team.

What do you do if someone gets on your nerves or frustrates you?

While this question is essentially asking how they resolve conflict, the nature of the inquiry provokes just a little to see how they manage their response. Do they go instantly try to disparage the other person, or begin by explaining how to defuse the situation?

How do you respond when someone interrupts you during a task?

In busy technology start-ups, there is any number of interruptions happening throughout the day. Often team members will need to switch between priorities to meet deadlines.

Which best describes your working style?

Having a sense of how the candidate defines their working style will give you some insight into whether they will complement your existing team or whether they will feel alienated or simply not be a good fit.

When working as a member of a team, I like to begin projects by which of the following? Tackling physical tasks, having lots of ideas, looking for efficiencies, or outlining goals and objectives?

This question attempts to elicit an understanding of how the interviewee prioritizes tasks. It should also help to further your knowledge of how each candidate will relate and integrate with the working styles of the team they could be joining.

If you're feeling stuck on a project, how do you get unstuck?

Here we are looking at their go-to method for creative thinking and problem-solving. What techniques help them change their perspective and come at a challenge differently.

There is a fast-approaching deadline. How do you keep your team motivated to get your project finished on time?

With this question, we are looking to understand how they think about leadership and deadline management. Even if the posting is not for a management position, each team member needs to be working to help the others stay focused and deliver to deadline.

Are you working on a side project? If so, what is it, and why that?

For many technology professionals, their work is more than a job. Whether they're working on a side business or volunteering coding skills for a service club, they usually have something they're tinkering with after hours. Not only will this response provide insight into their personality, but you might also get a sense of what challenges excite them.

TECHNOLOGY QUESTIONS FOR TECH CANDIDATES

With the specific technical inquiries, you are looking to get a better sense of their overall skills. The questions listed below are delineated based on particular job titles. However, there is a good deal of overlap, and many of them could be used for most general technology-related roles.

It's essential that for highly skilled positions, you include a subject matter expert in the interview, and don't be afraid to have choice candidates follow up by completing a skills assessment test.

*The next five questions are primarily focused on a **Data Analyst** position*

What statistical methods do you employ when analyzing data?

While there are various right answers to this question, the candidate should very quickly be able to talk you through the simplex algorithm, Markov process, or bayesian method and why one is their preferred method.

Can you explain to me the Standard Data Analysis Process?

Prospects should be able to quickly take you through data exploration, data preparation, data modelling, validation, and implementation of the model and tracking.

How does Data Analysis differ from Data Mining?

A data analyst has to create equations based on sound reasoning to understand what the data is saying. Data mining relies on computer algorithms to craft the equations.

Can you talk to me about the Interquartile Range and describe for me how outliers affect the sample?

A qualified candidate should understand how the lower and upper quartile relates to each other and that the outlier (either multivariate or univariate), is a value that diverges from a sample's pattern.

What is the two-step data validation process, and how is it performed?

The short answer is data validation and data verification, but the more important piece is that they can easily explain how to complete each step.

*The next two questions are primarily focused on a **System Administrator** position.*

You're trying to resolve a password issue for a group of users, but your employed strategy is not working. What do you do?

System Admins are used to working on problems and dealing with frustration. This team member is going to be continually troubleshooting technical problems. In an interview, they should be able to walk you through their logic for diagnosing a problem systematically. While they should have several go-to options, it shouldn't feel haphazard or random.

Why shouldn't you restore your DC from an eight-month-old back-up?

With this question, you are looking for jargon that demonstrates that the candidate has a solid grasp of the technology. They should recognize DC as a domain controller and reference the 180 day standard for DC back-ups. Anything older is likely to encounter lingering objects that can lead to inconsistent data.

*The next three questions are primarily focused on a **Software Developer***

Can you walk me through the six stages of Software Development and talk to me about which area you enjoy most?

Sometimes called the Software Development Lifecycle, this is the closest thing to a Coder's Bible. And, while they will usually be a part of the entire cycle, knowing where they excel will help you determine how they fit with your existing team. The sequence is as follows: Planning, analysis, design, development & implementation, testing, and maintenance.

Can you talk to me about your favourite programming languages?

Good Software Developers are going to have their preferred programming languages, but they should be comfortable working in a large variety. Software language is an area where you want to ensure you have a good understanding of your team's needs. If you're not the expert, make sure you have a team member who speaks the language in the room. For six years in a row, Stack Overflow has found the vast majority of Software developers prefer working in JavaScript. However, interestingly, the most coveted coding language (if not by a large margin) is Python.

How do you test the quality of your code?

It's not just about getting a product finished. Any useful software product needs to have high-quality lines of code. Have your prospective Developer talk you through their coding standard, use of Static analyzers, or any other preferred method of ensuring quality.

*The next six questions are primarily focused on a **Software Engineer** position*

Can you explain to me the importance of Agile Development principles?

Since the 90s, the Agile Method has been reliably producing well designed, customer-focused software products. Any prospective employee looking for an Engineering title should be able to elaborate on how the 12 Principles help a team to execute well on complex projects.

How familiar are you with Multi-Threading?

The Multi-Threading process runs snippets of code from several processors, preventing the code from hanging. This function works to improve the overall performance of an application. Any talented Software Engineer should be able to walk through this concept with ease.

How comfortable are you with OOP analysis and design?

Object-oriented programming (OOP) is the essence of significant programming languages VB, Java, C++, and C#. A good Developer, and especially a reliable SE, should have a firm grasp of this and be able to simplify the concept in an interview.

Can you talk to me about the advantages of unit testing?

Generally, part of any Software Engineers best practices, Unit Testing is an extra bit of code that tests for logic errors, coding mistakes, and overall it helps reduce the frequency of bugs. What's essential for you as the hiring manager is to determine how much emphasis the applicant places on Unit Testing during their planning. Reliable tech products depend on well-planned unit testing.

Can you walk me through SQL, what it means, and how you use it?

Structured Query Language is an American National Standards Institute computer language used for analyzing and evaluating database systems. Used by Developers and Quality Assurance Analysts throughout the process, it separates analysis from data for a more trustworthy review.

What role do you play in quality assurance?

It used to be very standard for developers to write code and rely on others to test it. While this practice has mostly ended, you should still have the candidate outline how they involve themselves in all aspects of their projects, from conception to launch.

EVALUATION

After the interviews are complete, the members of the hiring team should review the notes and scores they assigned throughout the process and be ready to discuss their impressions of the candidate.



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BEFORE YOU BEGIN

First, consider the makeup of the hiring committee. It's crucial to represent the team, management, and all the stakeholders who will be interacting with your new employee. It's also vital that you do everything possible to control for personal bias. An excellent place to start is to have a range of diversity participating in the interviews, both gender and cultural. Before selecting candidates to interview, employers may also want to consider using software that removes the applicant's name from the resume.

A **2016 study** out of the University of Toronto, found that companies are more than twice as likely to call minority applicants for interviews if they submit "whitened" resumes, rather than candidates who reveal their race. These discriminatory practices turned out to be just as strong for businesses that claim to value diversity as those that don't. And, when it comes to recruiting the best people to build your business, failing to control for these biases may be robbing companies of the talent they need.

RELY ON OUR EXPERTISE

If you need assistance with any of the steps in the hiring process, we're here to help. **LRO Staffing** has worked for over 15 years to help hundreds of employers find and recruit the talent they need to build their business. We are committed to placing the right people in the right positions. With our extensive network and strong industry relationships, our experienced recruitment team can help you gain access to the broadest array of candidates to consider. Not to mention, we can offer tailored solutions to meet your organization's exact needs.