

# CLIENT INTERVIEW GUIDE

**Congratulations!** You've successfully identified candidates who are potential fits for your mission-critical hiring needs. Your goal (and ours) is now to ensure you're able to learn as much as possible about each interviewee – and to leave a lasting impression that maintains interest in your opportunity.

Over the course of your career, you've likely interviewed a number of candidates and performed well when identifying the best fit for your hiring needs. The purpose of this guide is to help build on what you already know and make the most of candidate visits. The interview is much more than a Q&A session with prospective employees. It's a chance to showcase your organization's best traits and to build connections which could serve you and your team well in the short and long run (whether they get the job or not).

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# INTERVIEW OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of any thorough interview process is to confirm that a candidate is qualified, available and interested.  
Let's talk about what each concept means:

## Q UALIFIED

Can this person perform at a high level in this role? There likely are five to ten core competencies for each of your organization's most important roles. Your goal is to find candidates who meet as many of those as possible. This is your chance to gauge technical knowledge, cultural fit and decide whether they meet those roles' requirements.

**Experience-Based**  
**Behavior-Based**  
**Case-Based**

## A VAILABLE

Career changes require both professional and personal alignment. Are the person's circumstances conducive to a career shift and perhaps even relocation? Is there any reason this candidate would not be in position to accept your offer (such as an upcoming bonus, family circumstances or area ties)?

## I NTERESTED

You not only want to attract A-players; you want to retain them. You need to attract genuinely interested individuals who embrace the mission, values and goals of your organization. Learn whether each candidacy is based on the right reasons and determine whether each party would benefit.



# EXPERIENCE-BASED

Experience-based interviews are used to understand career trajectories. Why has this person chosen previous roles? Does he demonstrate upward progression in his career? Do his reasons for changing jobs make sense?

Review the sample questions below:

- “What were your primary roles and responsibilities?”

Clear, concise and structured answers are best.

- “What are the accomplishments you’re most proud of?”

The top ones are typically quantifiable and include numbers. Examples: Growth and profit, reduction of expenditures, improvement in cycle time, etc. Accomplishments can also include awards and recognition (e.g., public accolades from the CEO or a top performer’s spot on the President’s Trek).

- “Walk me through a recent project you spearheaded. What was the problem you were tasked with solving? What process did you use? Who else was involved in solving it? What was your specific role in relation to other team members? What analysis did you conduct? What were the results?” Make sure they are quantifiable, keeping in mind that details matter. (Example: If the person built a model in Excel, what were some of the inputs and outputs? What were some of the formulas?) The most talented people joyfully recall such details. Meanwhile, B- and C-level players won’t be able to recall and may grow frustrated at this level of questioning. Even executives want to talk in detail about the initiatives which brought change to their firms, almost to the point where you will have to interrupt them.

- “Why did you make certain career transitions? You were in this role for (X amount of time). What drove your decision to leave that position for a new one?” An example of a poor answer: “I was recruited by another business.” The best answers are those where candidates focus primarily on why they’re excited about your opportunity and less about why they’re leaving their current role.



# BEHAVIOR-BASED

These interviews revolve around the premise that past actions are the best indicators of future performance. This method covers situations candidates experienced ... and how they handled them.

- Getting the job done sometimes requires unusual persistence or dedication, especially when individuals face obstacles or distractions. Tell me about a time when you had to be persistent to reach your goals.
- Please describe a couple of long-term strategies which you devised and implemented.
- Tell me about a work situation when you had to stand up for a decision you made even though it was unpopular.
- From time to time, we all face work situations which put us under a lot of stress. Tell me about a recent work example when you were under pressure.
- Nearly everyone is unfairly criticized on the job at some point, either by a boss or colleague. Tell me about a time when you were in that situation.
- Instead of using authority to influence another individual, sometimes it's better to lead by example. Describe a work situation when you served as a role model to others.

View our [master list](#) for a collection of behavioral interview questions.



# CASE-BASED

A favorite of consulting and investment banking firms, Case-Based Interviewing focuses on critical thinking skills. Candidates solve business problems by asking questions and proposing solutions. During these interviews, look for the following in an individual: calm under pressure; creative thinking; problem solving; decisiveness; analytical ability; and presentation skills. Here are some examples:

**The Case:** Your uncle is the owner of a prominent industrial light bulb manufacturing company in Portugal. Knowing your great experience in business, he calls you for advice as his company's revenue has been declining for the past three years. He needs your help to diagnose the problem and establish a turnaround plan that will lead to renewed growth.

**The Question:** This case can be divided into three parts. (1) What are the possible reasons why revenue at the company has been declining? (2) Once identified, what immediate steps do you recommend your uncle take to deal with the challenges of the organization? (3) What long-term initiatives do you recommend your uncle engage to reignite growth for the company?

**Other case questions:** Estimation case questions are helpful for highly analytic roles.

1. How many gas stations are there in the United States? How many will there be 10 years from now?
2. How many french fries were eaten in the United States yesterday?
3. How many people are currently surfing in the USA?

For more case study examples, visit [ConsultingCase101.com](http://ConsultingCase101.com).



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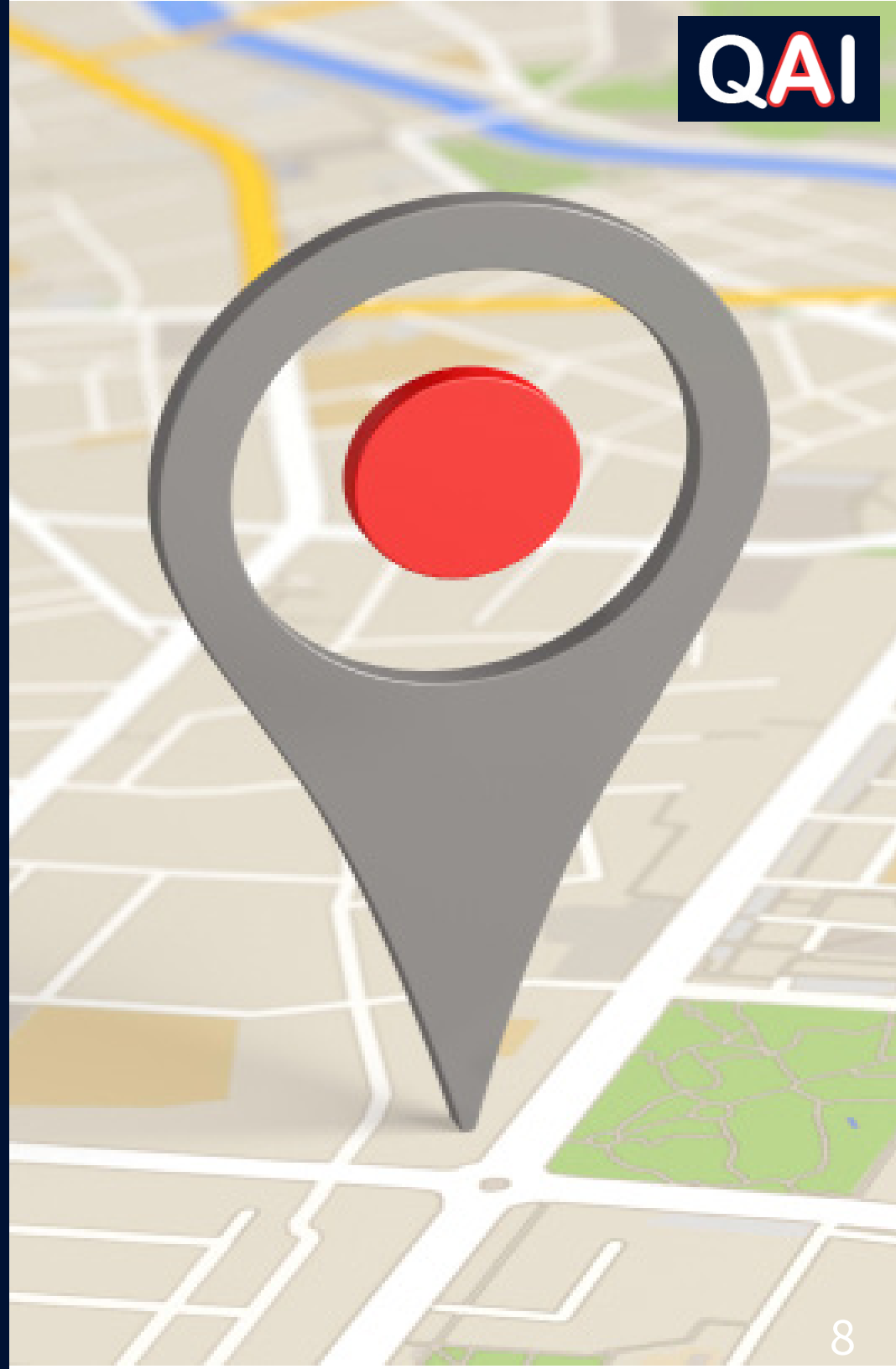


# ASSESSING AVAILABILITY



Accurately gauging the availability of a candidate can save your hiring team heartache and time, if managed appropriately. To measure the availability of someone you're interviewing, it's important that they address and check four major boxes:

- 1. Location:** You need to assess whether candidates are comfortable with the location of your organization, the community and its culture, and whether the location matches their livability preferences (including any expected commutes). It's also important to gain an understanding of others who would be impacted by a move – partners, children and even parents who might come along. Do these relationships present potential tripwires during the process?
- 2. Immigration status:** If you're actively interviewing international candidates, you must be aware of their immigration status. Do they possess the proper credentials to avoid immigration-related red tape ranging from citizenship to Green Cards and visa status? Simply asking a candidate what immigration status allows them to work in the United States can help you get ahead of the curve.
- 3. Noncompetes:** A-players have a great deal of knowledge related to their industries and functions, and those you're interviewing may have ties to competitors in your space. If that's the case, be aware of any noncompete clauses they may have with their current or most recent employer, and confirm that they would be able to join your organization in a time frame that is also comfortable for you. We strongly recommend avoiding candidates that have a noncompete. While it's hard to enforce a noncompete, the legal requirements of overcoming one can be frustrating and expensive.
- 4. Compensation factors:** The final consideration for availability is to gauge whether triggering events are in candidates' near future. Triggering events can include upcoming promotions, bonus pay, vesting of a long-term incentive such as equity, clawbacks and any additional considerations which might influence them to remain with their current organizations longer than anticipated. These events are especially prevalent at midyear and year's end, so be cognizant of them when discussing your timeline and expectations with candidates.





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# ASSESSING TRUE INTEREST

Seek to accurately measure the legitimate interest of candidates. Interviewing for a new position is flattering, and most people are naturally curious about new opportunities. That being said, there are a lot of “tire kickers” who are happy to participate in an interview process without any true desire to make a career change. Interested candidates generally do a great job in four areas:

**1. High energy:** Genuinely interested candidates have a knack for facilitating quality conversations. Individuals who are attentive to both verbal and visual cues, lean forward while engaged in conversation about the role and speak with a high level of enthusiasm are those who are most excited about your opportunity.

**2. Why this company? Why now?** We all know if a candidate’s current job was perfect, they wouldn’t be seeking a new role. When it comes to discussing motivation for a job change, there’s a right answer and a wrong answer. When discussing why a candidate is interested in your opportunity, they should provide forward-thinking answers which focus on why they are excited about your opportunity. You want to gauge whether a candidate is actively running toward your opportunity or running away from their current situation.

**3. Due diligence:** Legitimately interested candidates come to interviews properly prepared, having conducted research on your organization, its history and values, and the individuals with whom they know they’ll meet. Do they show a connection with your organization’s mission and values? It’s also important to gauge tone and passion when speaking to a candidate. Legitimately interested candidates have plenty to say, and will do so with excitement and forward thinking.

**4. Thoughtful questions:** Candidates should be assessed by both the quality of their answers to your questions and the quality of questions they ask of you. Be sure to provide candidates with enough time to ask their own questions during the interview process. Are they asking generic questions which could be asked of any opportunity, or have they truly thought through your opportunity to ask questions which demonstrate a high level of engagement?



# SELLING

**It's important to fully sell your organization's opportunity with candidates, just like it's their job to sell their skill sets to you.**

We've identified Four Reasons A-players Change Jobs, which together should serve as anchors for your organization's value proposition. A-level leaders value the Job, the Company, the People and the Opportunity when considering a career change, so it's imperative that you prepare to address these topics of interest with each and every candidate.

We recommend assigning one member of your interview team the responsibility of selling your organization on a particular topic while conducting that team member's portion of the interview sessions. By doing so, your hiring team will show a united front focused on attracting the right professional to your organization.

One additional consideration: It's vital to know whether each interviewee is an active candidate or a passive candidate. The Charles Aris executive search team primarily identifies and delivers passive candidates. That means you should be in sales mode throughout the interview process.

A-players are already in mission-critical roles for other organizations. You should ensure that they understand the value of the role you're looking to fill.



# INTERVIEW TIMING

The following allocation of time can help you design an effective one-hour interview:



**0:05**

## Introduction

This includes rapport building and an interviewer introduction. Touch on your background and current role as well as what brought you to the organization.



**0:10**

## Career path

Ask the sorts of questions which enable candidates to tell you about themselves, and be sure to request a high-level background walkthrough.



**0:25**

## Achievements / Case interview

Ask for two or three significant accomplishments from the past two years. Alternatively, this could also be when a case interview takes place.



**0:05**

## Targeted questions

Ask about any mission-critical skills not covered during the portion covering key achievements.



**0:05**

## Self-appraisal

This is where the candidate can self-report strengths and weaknesses.



**0:10**

## Questions / Close

Allow time for additional questions about the position, the team and the organization. In closing, underscore one of the Four Reasons to join your team.

# INTERVIEW LOGISTICS

Tell candidates what will happen from the moment they leave their home to the moment they return to it.

**A.** Assign candidates a buddy. Half a century in recruiting tells us that designating an ambassador on the hiring team – but not part of the official interview panel – goes a long way toward creating a more enjoyable atmosphere for candidates. This team member should handle the following in coordination with each candidate:

- Reach out to the candidate for an introduction before the visit
- Explain the interview process and how it fits in the hiring process
- Provide details for parking, building access and where to meet
- On arrival, give a brief but compelling tour of the building
- Show the candidate to interview locations throughout the visit
- Review the day and answer any questions before departure

Learn about the buddy system to enhance your interview process.

**B.** Confirm the date, time and location. There are a host of details which candidates should know – so the more you proactively share them, the better. If you're partnering with a Charles Aris search project team, we'll work together with your team to decide details such as:

- How candidates will navigate to your site
- How long interviews will take
- And whom the candidate should ask to see on arrival

We instruct candidates to arrive 10-15 minutes early, and we responsibly prep them for their time with you. Thanks to the buddy system, many of these logistical details can be confirmed beforehand.

**C.** Troubleshoot. Have a backup plan, such as alternate locations in your building, in case any issues arise. If you're working with a Charles Aris search team and there's a problem prior to the interview, please contact the candidate immediately and notify your Charles Aris partners.



# INTERVIEWING 101

Much of the following may seem self-evident to an experienced pro. The purpose of this guide is to ensure the best possible interview experience, however, so we'll leave nothing to chance.

**1. Prep for the interviews.** Crafting a successful interview process requires preparation and anticipation of your candidates' needs. Clearly define your process and the steps necessary to create a valuable experience for your interviewers and candidates. Key details include:

- How many steps lie between the introduction and offer stages
- How many people are on the interview panel
- Who will serve as the point person for each candidate

Incorporating key stakeholders – who each have differing areas of focus, cultural contributions and influences on the organization – can help you develop your search plan. Remember: Time kills all deals. The more efficient and valuable you can make your interview experience, the stronger the perception a candidate will have of your organization.

**2. Sell the candidate.** We're in a candidate-driven environment where first movers gain the greatest rewards. A-players are seeking short interview processes as they evaluate other offers. Keep in mind:

- You're likely not the only organization being considered
- Break interviews into segments, with multiple team members on the panel
- Have different people focus on different core competencies
- Designate one team member to sell the Job, the Company, the People and the Opportunity

This is your time to sell candidates on your organization and its people!



# INTERVIEWING 101

(continued)

**3. Show you care.** Candidates begin evaluating your organization as early as the first engagement. They should have already spoken with their assigned buddies and received the details of their interview day.

Ensure you make a strong first impression by having a team member greet each candidate at the front door. This person may also be responsible for helping move the candidate from location to location throughout the day.

Be cognizant of human needs over the course of the day, providing snacks, lunches and breaks between interviews to enable the candidate to properly decompress between sessions. These actions show the candidate that you realize your organization is asking a lot of them, and that you're being a thoughtful partner throughout the process.

Finally, be sure to include sessions with cultural beacons of your organization so that the candidate can get a true grasp of the team. These people may not have a say in the hiring decision but can go a long way in selling your organization and the opportunity.

**4. Leave an impression.** At the end of the interview, be sure to have someone (ideally their buddy) ready to walk the candidate out of the building. This person should be assigned to explain next steps in the process and set a timeframe for the candidate to expect to hear from you.

Market your brand by offering the candidate something with your name on it. Even something as small as a simple tchotchke (pens, notebooks, promotional items) can go a long way.

If you've offered candidates an enjoyable interview experience, they're more likely to remain interested in the opportunity and to pursue an offer.

# QUESTIONS TO EXPECT

You've prepared your questions for candidates ... are you ready to answer theirs?

Examples of questions you might receive are below:

**What first-year contributions are you expecting from the person in this role?**

**How will this professional contribute to the success of the organization?**

**Please identify three to five attributes which describe your top performers.**

**Please describe your organization's culture and the types of people who best fit it.**

**Tell me about your leadership style and how you like to collaborate with people who report to you.**

**What are two or three significant opportunities or challenges which your organization faces – and how do you plan to capitalize on or solve them?**

**Which other teams of the organization will the person in this role interact with on a regular basis?**

**What do you love about this organization – and why do others love working here?**

**How do you envision the potential career path(s) of a successful individual in this role?**

**How do you see a person with my background adding value to your organization?**



# EFFECTIVE CLOSING

**As interviews end, leave candidates with a positive, lasting impression.**

If you've acted on much of the guidance here, candidates are likely interested in joining your organization. Candidates often entertain multiple offers, so be sure to hit the highest points of your sales pitch as you enter the offer stage.

A-players want to know such information as:

- Whether target bonuses have paid out as expected in recent years
- How your organization's benefits package is designed
- And what life is like in your organization's community

This is a life-changing decision for candidates, so make sure to sell them on everything from the role and culture to your community and everything in between.

Many organizations find success when proactively gauging candidate interest during the interview process. It's perfectly acceptable to ask interviewees to evaluate their candidate experience with your organization – and to provide suggestions which might help refine your interview process.

If a candidate checks all the boxes and you want to extend an offer, it's perfectly acceptable (even advised) to ask what compensation expectations and offer details would spark them to commit to the role today. The quicker you're willing to move the process along and help meet a candidate's expectations, the more likely you are to land an A-player.



# INTERVIEW FOLLOW-UP

Whether you're working with a Charles Aris search team or navigating the hiring process internally, you should answer a few of our favorite questions to debrief after each interview:

1. Did you feel comfortable with the candidate you interviewed today? Can you see yourself working with her successfully?

2. Based on the information you learned today, are you confident that the candidate can successfully do the job? Are there any areas of concern which might prevent her from doing the job? Consider technical and cultural fit when making your assessments.

3. On a scale of 1 to 10 (with 1 being absolutely no interest in pursuing this candidate any further and 10 being a perfect fit), where do you fall in regard to this candidate?

4. How did the interview end? Did you establish next steps with the candidate? How would you prefer to proceed in the process (i.e., enter the offer stage, conduct interviews with other candidates, alter your current search strategy)?





299 North Greene Street  
Greensboro, NC 27401  
(336) 378-1818  
[CharlesAris.com](http://CharlesAris.com)