



How to hire for culture fit

Hiring someone who doesn't match your organisational culture can impact on productivity, create conflict and affect customer experience.

Finding people with who are the right 'fit' for your organisation is often one of the most challenging parts of recruitment. The good news is that assessing candidates for cultural fit is not as difficult as you might think.

What is cultural fit?

At Kingston Human Capital, we see cultural fit as **the alignment of a prospective employee's core values, normative behaviours and fundamental needs, attitudes, and goals—with those of the hiring organisation.** This means there is a fundamental 'match' between both parties.

Think of it like this: when you bring someone new in to your team, you want them to be part of your work 'family' for the long term in a way that adds value to both the organisation, the immediate team, and the stakeholders you serve.

People with the same (or similar) values and goals will work well with your existing team. While skills and knowledge can be taught, it can be very difficult for someone to align with a core value or behaviour that they do not hold as important.



Here are three steps to help you hire for cultural fit:

- ① Identify the core values that map back to your organisational or team mission.
- ② Identify what attitudes and behaviours work within your organisation. This is the 'how' or the 'way' that you—as a collective group—go about achieving your mission.
- ③ Create interview questions that elicit information about your prospective employee's values, attitudes and behaviours. You can use these questions to match candidates to each specific role – and also the organisation's culture.



It's equally important to remember what *cultural fit* is not.

Forbes summarises this well:

"It's important to remember where diversity fits into this equation. Don't risk overlooking different cultures, lifestyles and backgrounds."

On the surface of things, a father of three might not fit what you think is the 'culture' of your young, single team who are willing to work late into the evening—but he likely brings some of the best historical knowledge of where the industry has been, or a better sense of what customers actually want.

Managers should regularly ask HR to review their culture fit questions (and decisions) to ensure they are not accidentally building a team of people who all think, look and act the exact same way. If you don't review this regularly, you'll run the risk of building a team that suffers the negative effects of groupthink—and lack of cognitive diversity.

Smart organisations want their people to be united by the company's shared mission. They leverage cognitive diversity and varying backgrounds to help their team achieve the mission by tackling problems in new ways, thinking outside of the box and ultimately bringing your culture to life."

Need help designing a range of interview questions to identify your candidate's values? To help get you started, we've put together a range of questions to help identify prospective employees' values.

General value-based questions

- What values must an organisation have in order to be aligned with yours? Why?
- What is most important to you in the workplace? Why?
- What do you define as good team culture? Can you share some examples of how that culture translates in to behaviour?
- What do you define as a bad team culture? Can you share some examples of how that culture translates in to behaviour?
- What would a cultural 'deal breaker' be for you?

Integrity questions

- What does integrity mean to you. What does it mean to you in the workplace?
- Have you ever faced an ethical dilemma at work? What was the issue and what did you do?
- What sits badly with you in terms of your internal moral compass?
- 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.
- If you saw a co-worker doing something that would hurt or damage the organisation, what would you do?
- If you knew your manager was doing something unethical, how would you handle it?
- What would you do if you were asked to do something that went against your values?

Collaboration questions

- Describe your ideal team member. Have you ever worked with someone who embodied these characteristics?
- Describe a time your team failed to complete a project on time. What would you do differently, if you had the chance?
- What would you do if you had to work with a person you didn't get along with?
- Do you prefer to work alone or as part of a team?
- What does 'effective collaboration' look like to you?
- Tell me about a time you disagreed with a team member. What happened?
- Describe a time when you had to work with someone you didn't get along with. What did you do?
- What role do you typically take on when working in a team? Can you give me an example of this?

Accountability questions

- Describe a successful team project you worked on? What was your contribution?
- How would you react if your team received negative feedback about a part of the project that was entirely assigned to you?



Innovation questions

- ❑ Describe a situation where you were facing a technical issue and your normal troubleshooting method wasn't working. What did you do?
- ❑ Can you give me an example of a well-designed product? What features make this product unique?
- ❑ What is innovation to you?
- ❑ Do you think there is such a thing as too much innovation? Why?

Adaptability questions

- ❑ Describe a time when you had to adapt to change.
- ❑ Tell me about a time when you felt unable to adapt in the workplace. Why?
- ❑ Tell me about a time when a negative change was rolled out in one of your workplaces? Why was it negative and what could have been done differently?
- ❑ Tell me about a time when you've seen change not well managed
- ❑ Have you ever had to change a project around at the last minute? What did you do? How did it work out?
- ❑ What does 'being adaptable' mean to you? What workplace behaviors demonstrate that you are being adaptable?

Dedication questions

- ❑ Tell me about a time you became disengaged at work. What happened?
- ❑ Describe the time you were happiest and most productive at work. What responsibilities did you have?
- ❑ Tell me about an achievement that was difficult to reach. How did you accomplish it?
- ❑ Have you ever taken the initiative to learn something new for a job? Tell me about it.

Responsibility questions

- ❑ Have you ever had to juggle more projects than you had time for? How did you prioritise?
- ❑ Tell me about a time when you had to pass your work onto a co-worker because you couldn't meet deadlines. What did you learn from the experience?
- ❑ Tell me about a time when a co-worker's work was passed onto you. Were you able to get the work done? What was your reaction to the situation?
- ❑ Describe a time when you were late for an important meeting. What happened?
- ❑ If you made a mistake that could cost you your job and nobody knew it was you, what would you do?

Kingston Human Capital specialise in helping great leaders recruit and build great teams. If you'd like assistance with your recruitment strategy, contact us today:

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