

Chapter 1

The employers' perspective on Soft Skills

Annex 3 - Infosheet - Employers soft skills assessment techniques

| How do employers assess soft skills? | |
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| Step 1 Looking at the wording used on the CV | Step 2 Asking (situational and/or behavioural) questions to potential candidates |
| For leadership they look for: 'trained', 'advised', 'directed' | 'Describe a project or idea that was implemented primarily because of your efforts' 'What was your role?' 'What was the outcome?' 'Tell me about a time you took the lead when your team was in a difficult position' 'What would you do if your team members disagreed with your instructions?' |
| <i>To evaluate if candidates took initiative, express ownership of their work, how passionate they felt about the project, if they seemed to work well with others, if they accomplished a successful result.</i> | |
| For communication they look for: 'negotiated', 'consulted', 'collaborated' | 'Have you ever had a disagreement with another employee at work?' 'How did you resolve it?' 'How would you explain this term to someone from a different discipline?' |
| <i>These questions are used to evaluate if the candidates clearly articulated their issue with their co-worker and whether they were able to resolve the problem without escalating. If they say they never had a disagreement it may be a red flag.</i> <i>Employers also look at body-language to assess communication skills.</i> | |

For **problem solving** and **critical thinking** they look for:

‘resolved’, ‘improved’, ‘orchestrated’

‘Can you describe a project where you ran into an unforeseen issue?’ ‘How did you approach the situation?’

These questions are used to evaluate how candidates identify challenges, how they think on their feet or how they analyse a complex situation. If candidates can’t articulate their thought process or sought direction from a third party, they may not be self-starters.

For **accountability** they look for:

‘created’ ‘authored’, ‘contributed’

‘Tell me about a time when you made a mistake. What did you learn?’

These questions are used to evaluate where candidates place the blame, and if they view the mistake as a learning experience, which is a positive sign as it signifies that they take ownership of their work. If they point their fingers at others, or say they couldn’t have done anything differently, is suspicious.

For **teamwork** they look for:

‘collaborated’ ‘cooperated’ ‘helped’

‘Tell me about a time you had to deal with a team member who constantly opposed your ideas’

‘How would you react if a team leader encouraged competition between team members instead of collaboration?’

For **critical thinking**:

‘Tell me about a time you had to decide with incomplete information’

‘If you spotted a mistake in a report but your manager wasn’t available, what would you do?’

For **work ethic**:

‘Tell me about a time you faced an ethical dilemma at work’

‘If you discovered your supervisor was breaking the company’s code of conduct, what would you do?’

| Step 3 Other examples of questions that an employer could ask are: | |
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| When you have multiple deadlines to meet, how do you decide what tasks to prioritize? | How would you spend your first week on the job here? |
| What have you learned about yourself in the last week? | What would you do in this hypothetical scenario? (give scenario) |
| Describe your previous/current company from when you were hired and what improvements you made while you were there. | Pitch our product to me as if I was a prospective customer. |

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