

Traits Based Interviewing Questions

According to Marketing Personnel Research (MPR), Inc., a firm specializing in productivity improvement by selection and management of talented personnel for all positions in an organization, the following behavioral traits are desirable in an office or clerical worker. So the next time you interview a candidate for an office or clerical position, ask these questions and listen for answers which reflect the examples in the evidence of trait column.

TRAIT:	Achiever
QUESTION:	What three accomplishments do you take most pride in?
EVIDENCE OF TRAIT:	- examples mention personal recognition, awards, and freedom to act
NO EVIDENCE OF TRAIT:	- difficulty naming accomplishments - examples give no evidence of personal need for recognition or autonomy

TRAIT:	Discerner
QUESTION:	Sooner or later we all have days or times when we are disappointed in our performance. Tell me about a time when this happened to you and what you did about it.
EVIDENCE OF TRAIT:	- analyzed and tried to improve - asked others for feedback/criticism
NO EVIDENCE OF TRAIT:	- has never been disappointed - described disappointment as a result of someone else's fault

TRAIT:	Empathetic
QUESTION:	You answer the phone and at the other end of the line is a customer who is extremely upset at your company and starts to take it out on you. What would you do?
EVIDENCE OF TRAIT:	- sympathetic to customer plight - willing to listen
NO EVIDENCE OF TRAIT:	- gets defensive - shows no sensitivity to feelings of customer

TRAIT:	Work Intensity
QUESTION:	What kind of a work day tends to make you the most tired? During days like that, what do you do to keep your energy level up?
EVIDENCE OF TRAIT:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - slow day is tiring - likes to stay busy - takes on more work
NO EVIDENCE OF TRAIT:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - fast paced day is tiring - takes time off

TRAIT:	Service Oriented
QUESTION:	What are some of the things that motivate or make a job fulfilling for you?
EVIDENCE OF TRAIT:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - chance to be of service to customers or co-workers - working for a company providing quality service
NO EVIDENCE OF TRAIT:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - non-service - non-altruistic focus, e.g. "recognition of my efforts"

TRAIT:	Proactive
QUESTION:	How is your attitude or outlook typically affected by the attitudes of others?
EVIDENCE OF TRAIT:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - attitude is not appreciably altered by the moods of others - feels in control of their own attitude - not susceptible to ups and downs of others
NO EVIDENCE OF TRAIT:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - when others are down or negative, they get down themselves or begin to lose focus - suggests the way others look at things has an impact on how they look at things

TRAIT:	Relates Well to People
QUESTION:	How important is it for other people to like you? How would you rate that on a 1-10 scale, with 10 being high?
EVIDENCE OF TRAIT:	- eight or higher
NO EVIDENCE OF TRAIT:	- six or lower

TRAIT:	Responsible
QUESTION:	Have you ever missed a deadline or failed to complete some task assigned to you that others expected you to complete? (If yes) How did you feel about that? Why did you feel that way?
EVIDENCE OF TRAIT:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - no - yes, but shows acceptance of responsibility - takes ownership of task - shows concern that the deadline was missed - tried their best, but does not look for excuses or put blame elsewhere
NO EVIDENCE OF TRAIT:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - yes, but unwilling to take responsibility or show concern - tries to fix blame elsewhere or make excuses

TRAIT:	Values-driven
QUESTION:	What principles guide your conduct? (Note: if they state "professionalism," ask what it means to them.)
EVIDENCE OF TRAIT:	- ethical content, e.g. honesty, integrity, truthfulness
NO EVIDENCE OF TRAIT:	- high performance, but no reference to ethics