

Problem-Solving Questions to Ask in An Interview:

1. Can you describe your biggest work-related problem and the steps you took to resolve it?

This is a great introductory question as it gives the candidate a chance to describe their problem-solving process in as much detail as they like. Top candidates will explain why the problem occurred, how they resolved it, and why they chose that method.

Red Fags: The candidate cannot think of anything specific or describes a problem that was resolved quickly and easily with minimal effort.

2. Give me an example of a time when you realized a colleague of yours made a mistake that affected your work. How did you deal with the situation?

Not only does this question analyze the candidate's external problem-solving abilities, but also their collaboration, communication, and interpersonal skills. Look for candidates who approached the situation with a cool head and worked together to solve the problem.

Red Fags:

The candidate did not take any steps to resolve the situation.

3. Can you describe your troubleshooting process? This is a simple question that gives the candidate a chance to explain their general troubleshooting process. There is no right or wrong answer here as you are simply identifying how the candidate processes information.

Red Fags: The candidate cannot answer the question.

4. When you are faced with a difficult problem, what steps do you take to resolve it?

This question is similar to question 1 but focuses more on the steps taken to resolve a problem, rather than describing the problem itself.

Red Fags: The candidate feels that problems tend to resolve themselves naturally.

5. How do you decide when a different approach is needed to solve a problem?

Not all problems can be solved in the same way. This question reveals whether the candidate can analyze a problem fully before jumping into a resolution.



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Red Fags: The candidate will only try a different approach to a problem if the outcome is a failure the first time.

6. Tell me about a time when you predicted a problem with staffing or structural changes in your department. What did you do to resolve the issue?

This question tests the candidate's ability to identify an issue in the workplace and bring it to the attention of management before it becomes a problem. Look for candidates that speak up, propose reasonable alternatives, and assist with any changes.

Red Fags: The candidate has never identified any issues in the workplace, or they didn't want to get involved even though they knew there would be a problem.

7. What do you do when you cannot seem to find an effective solution to a problem? Everyone gets stuck sometimes. This question reveals the ways in which the candidate will find new ideas on how to proceed.

Red Fags:

There is no wrong answer to this question. Some people seek advice from colleagues, managers, and family, while others look at similar problems and process information internally. Candidates should be able to find a creative and effective way to incorporate new ideas to solve the problem.

8. What improvements have you made to your workplace in the last year?

Candidates with great problem-solving abilities should be able to identify areas that can and should be improved and either take steps to implement them themselves or initiate the process.

Red Fags: The candidate has not contributed to any improvements in the workplace.

9. Give me an example of a time when you solved a problem without the input of management? What was the result? This question highlights the candidate's ability to make decisions and solve problems by themselves.

Red Fags: While a degree of autonomy is encouraged in the workplace, major decisions that can affect the business should always be run by management.



Problem-Solving Questions to Ask in An Interview:

10. How do you organize your daily workload to ensure that all your tasks are complete? Reveals whether the candidate has an effective system that allows for setbacks and problem-solving in the workplace.

Red Fags: The candidate has never thought of implementing a system to plan their work or cater for delays.

11. How do you motivate yourself to achieve your goals when you have minimal supervision. Self-motivation is a major part of the problem-solving process if problems do come up. This question simply reveals the methods used by the candidate to stay motivated.

Red Fags: The candidate has never been in a situation where they had to work without supervision. Or, they cannot think of an effective way to self-motivate.

12. What do you do when you are asked to resolve an urgent issue without being given all the information?

Tests whether the candidate tries to solve the problem or waits for more information.

Red Fags: The answer to this question reveals more about the candidate's personality. Candidates that are confident in their decision-making process will ask for more information before they even begin to solve a problem. Others may start on the problem but get to a point where they can't resolve the issue without all the details.

13. Describe a time when you thought outside of the box to solve a problem either in your personal life or at work.

Reveals whether the candidate can come up with innovative ideas to solve a problem.

Red Fags: The candidate describes a solution that you would not describe as "out of the box" thinking.

14. Describe a time when you disagreed with a decision by management. What happened?

Reveals whether the candidate can speak up when they see a problem in the workplace.

Red Fags: Even if management still went ahead with their original decision, candidates should feel comfortable pointing out potential problems in the workplace. A red flag would be if the candidate has seen a potential problem, but chose to ignore it.



Problem-Solving Questions to Ask in An Interview:

15. Tell me about a time when you tried to solve a problem but ended up making it worse. What happened?

This is a great question to learn more about the candidate's personality and problem-solving skills. It reveals honesty and whether the candidate was able to incorporate what they learned into any future decisions.

Red Fags: The candidate claims they have never made a problem worse, or they never thought about how they should learn from their mistakes.

