

A GUIDE TO INTERVIEWING & HIRING PROJECT MANAGERS

Once you've waded through the eventual mountain of resumés and found a handful of good candidates to interview, it's time to find your match. So how do you go about that?

Be thorough, but don't kill yourself, your team, or the candidates with a long, drawn-out interview process. Here's what we recommend

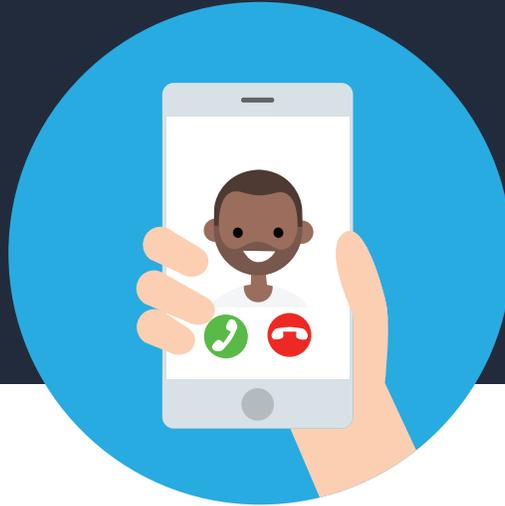
THE
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STEP 1

Phone Interview



This is always a great first step in determining how good a project manager could be and how they might fit into your team. If they have good phone etiquette, can hold a conversation, and seem comfortable, you'll want to meet them in person. So ask questions that get at their experience, personality, and potential cultural fit.

Some possible questions:

1. Tell me about yourself and your work experience.
2. What drew you to this job and this company?
3. What kind of company are you looking to work for?
4. What's your favorite thing about being a project manager?
5. What's your least favorite thing about being a project manager?
6. What has your favorite project been? Why?
7. Do you have any questions for me?

These questions may seem high-level, but that's the point! If you're a good interviewer with a great interviewee, you can turn a handful of questions into an hour-long conversation. And, at this stage in the process, you want to gauge the candidate for comfort and relatability.

One note: ALWAYS ask that last question. If the candidate doesn't have any questions for you, that should be a red flag—unless you've briefed them exhaustively on the role, the company, the team, projects, etc. After all, the interview process isn't just for you to get to know the candidate. It's also an opportunity for the candidate to get to know you.

STEP 2

In-person Interviews



The in-person interview can teach you so much about your candidates. Here are just a few things to look for:

- How they react under pressure
- How they'll present themselves in formal work settings, like large meetings and presentations
- How well they can think on their feet
- Chemistry with your team or interviewers
- The real facts that appear on their resumé
- An example of a project plan and/or planning materials, such as a timeline in Excel or another project planning tool, that the candidate can share

Do yourself a favor, and put some thought into how you want to structure your interviews. If you're a small company, you might just do one interview with a few team members. If you're at a larger company, you'll likely do a series of interviews. Either way, be sure to organize these meetings in a way that helps the candidate understand your organization and practices.

At the same time, ask questions that will give you insight into the candidate's career experience and goals, as well as how they'll handle the challenges your project managers face. And, of course, you want to get a sense for what it would be like to work with this person day in and day out.

Some possible questions:

1. How would you describe yourself as a project manager?
2. What do you like about being a project manager?
3. What do you dislike about being a project manager?
4. Are you versed in <company's project type and industry>?
5. Are there any project management methodologies you prefer? Any you don't know?
6. What has been your biggest challenge as a project manager?
7. What would you do if your project is going over time and over budget?
8. Are there any tools you feel you **MUST** use to manage a project?
9. What is your favorite go-to resource for project management?
10. Where do you seem to spend most of your time on projects?

Above all else, ask questions that help you get a sense of your candidate's project management style. Are they controlling? Do they work well under stress? Is this person a good communicator? If you zone in on what qualities are most important to you, you'll find the person who fits the role best for you. So tailor the questions, and don't forget to have a bit of fun with them too.



STEP 3

Watch the Follow-up



The last step is to see how well your candidate does with follow-up, and this one is critical. Why? Because following up is a huge part of any project manager's job, no matter where they work. You don't just want a project manager who's eager to work for your company, but someone who has the guts to chase down what they want (or need). As soon as you get a follow-up that feels right, you'll know you've found the right project manager for your team.

Hire!

Once you've found that special project manager, it's time to make an offer. There's something to be said about a good negotiator, especially when it comes to the project manager role. But, if you want to avoid that back and forth, be straightforward about what you can offer from day one. The last thing you want to do is make an offer that's way off base with your candidate's expectations. That'll just waste your time and frustrate you.

Let's face it: There's no foolproof plan for avoiding a bad hire. It happens. The best you can do is to put a process in place that makes you—and your team—feel more confident about the hire. By using these basic guidelines to draw the right candidates for your team, recruiting and interviewing will feel less like a chore and more like finding your favorite new coworker.