The 16 Most Revealing Interview Questions

These questions are in no particular order, as they should be customized to the particular position and person. You want to mix up the tougher ones with more social, calming questions so people do not feel they are getting the first degree.

Always do your questions first and theirs second, by saying up front you have some questions first and then will answer any questions they have about the position and company later. This way they cannot “sell” specifically to your needs and you can know how much to reveal, and about what position, in case they are more appropriate for something other than the one they came in for. You are in charge and should control the first interview completely. Only after they have proven that they are a viable candidate should you start revealing potentially sensitive company information. If this person is not a good candidate you can terminate the interview earlier and save everyone time. Real candidates will need and deserve this sensitive information, but you would not want this to be generally available. Good candidates will often try to control the flow of the interview and learn more early. You need to gently prod them to return to your questions first, so they cannot answer every question specifically to your need, but must answer for them more honestly about themselves.

Please walk me through a typical day at your current/previous job and tell about your boss and your relationship with them?
Tests their resume against their title and actual duties. Did they have a title above or below their actual position? Probes their level of supervision by their boss and how much autonomy they we given? Show what level they think on – daily or longer-term objectives.
Tell me about the people you hired in your last position? How long did they stay? What percentage worked out?
Tests knowledge of turn-over, training and honesty too (since no one has a 100% success rate).

What adjectives would your references use to describe you?
Keep it short and can be compared to actual reference comments to see how self-aware they are about their strengths and weaknesses?

What are the biggest strengths you will bring to this organization? (a classic but important)
Purposely open ended to all them to sell their abilities. Looking for specifics and past accomplishments

What are the things you do not like to do, or not want to work on?
A test for honesty and self-awareness. Also a less threatening way to ask about weaknesses. We all have weaknesses, are they willing to take a risk, be honest and explain where they might need help? Are there requirements of this position that require certain personality types or traits that they may, or may not have?

The “Anti.refs” Question (One of the BEST and most revealing spend some time digging in.)
Think of someone you have had problems with in your career, as we all do, who you would NEVER use as a reference. Tell me the adjectives (to keep short) they might use to describe you and why they had this perception? Then we can discuss how you dealt with the situation.
This is a great backdoor to the weaknesses questions and far more effective. It is very open-ended and often brings them to deal with a hidden event or problem. Gets potential reference points they will not volunteer and companies or environments where they may struggle. Test honesty? Tests their ability to deal with difficult situations? Tests their impressions of the resolution of the problem(s) and if the company’s mission still got done in spite of personal issues. This also gives you specific things to ask references about, with implied disclosure, that force more honest answers.

**Tell me what are the first five things you would do if you got this position?**
Tests the level they think at, how they go about solving problems, how quickly they will dig in. How much research and investigation they will do before implementing changes to be sensitive to the organization, history and other company specific issues.

**What accomplishment in your career to date are you most proud of?**
What level is the accomplishment at? Is it big or small?

**Where would you like to be in 3-5 years in your career? What would you like to be earning?**
Shows ambition, ability to think ahead and plan and tests their plans against the companies goals for the person and position.

**Tell me how you would go about ________ (installing a new system, implement a new procedure)?**
This is a position specific question to test specific technical or managerial knowledge. Too many people do not ask specific deep technical questions, because they do not know them or are worried about offending. You need a few domain knowledge
questions that are deep, technical and esoteric enough to prove they understand their technical landscape.

**What do you think are the most important five (3-7) things for you to be successful in this position?**
Candidate will most often site what they believe to be their strengths, which may or may not agree with your corporate priorities and goals.

**What are some things your current employer could do differently to be more successful?**
Sour grapes or constructive criticism? What is the level they are thinking at small or large ideas?
If nothing but complaints they could be a malcontent, who took no action to improve the situation, or would have a negative impact on company morale.

**Why are you interested in this job? What do you know about our company?**
Genuine interest here or just another job? Shows knowledge of your company - Did they do their homework on your company what level of information did they focus on and consider important? Do they talk about a career path that makes sense within your company?

**What have been the biggest failure and frustrations in your career?**
Brings out attitudes about failure, risk, and self-responsibility versus just blaming others and outside factors.

**Why have you decided to leave your current/previous position?**
Dig deeply into this with follow-up questions on their answers? Whatever is driving this person is critical to how they see the world. What did they do to try to correct what was driving them away? Was it out of their control, or possibly projection of their own issues and weaknesses?

**What risks did you take in your last position?**

Studies indicate that people who take risk are generally more successful than those who do not!

Discussion on this can be very revealing. In early-stage organizations you will not want to hire people who are not too risk averse, as they may jump at the first new opportunity after learning how up and down things can be.

In my opinion these are some of the best and most revealing interviewing questions. More should be added with job or industry specific questions and this can be done with a forty-five minute interview. Use the small question for people in the same position and process so you can compare apples to apples and have some consistency.

I also always note the number of employees and/or revenue of each company on their resume, as skills are often company size specific. Someone in a small company inevitably has more scope and responsibility for a task than at a big company, where the duties are more likely divided up between several specialists. Claim of success need to be understood in terms of actual contribution. (“Every success has many mothers/fathers, but failure is an orphan”.)

Always understand their salary requirements and commute distance if they are a strong candidate, as these can vary enormously by candidate and be major factors visa vie your
ability to close the deal. Remember salary is more often a function of ego and background than value or effectiveness. A high salary request does not make a better candidate, though the best candidates know their value in the marketplace.

No decision has more impact than a hiring decision, as they will make many, many decision for you and the organization from that point forward. It has been estimated that the cost of a bad hiring decision can be as high as three times the salary in senior positions. So take your time and do it right never compromise due to time constraints, but get a temporary solution until you have the best candidate available.
Appendix - Other Products For CEOs, Entrepreneurs and C-Level Executives To Help Grow Your Business More Rapidly

C-Level Enterprises, Inc. offers a series of unique books as part of titled “The Secrets of a Serial Entrepreneur™. These books are all written by Bob Norton and are designed to be used at key points in a company’s development life cycle, and throughout the development of the company. They are a great alternative to high-price consulting services from business launch experts and will greatly increase any entrepreneur’s chances of success. They provide proven frameworks for success, developed by Bob Norton over 15 years as a CEO and 25 years as a serial entrepreneur, to help break through some of the most common and practical traps that growing businesses fall in to virtually all the time; if they have not grown a business before to this size.

The entire series can be seen at http://www.CLevelEnterprises.com/products.htm if you are online go there for the most up-to-date information now. Otherwise you can read below. The Books cover the business development steps: Design, Launch, Hire and Manage. And ideally should all be read in that order.
Books and Tapes For CEOs, Entrepreneurs and C-Level Executives To Help Grow Your Businesses More Rapidly and Develop Long-term Competitive Advantage

These books are all written by Bob Norton, a serial entrepreneur for over 25 years and a CEO for more than 15 years. Mr. Norton is one of the leading authorities in the world on entrepreneurship, intrapreneurship and growing businesses rapidly. He has participated in eight startup companies, grown two to over $100 million in sales and several have dominated their respective markets. He has also worked for two multi-billion dollar corporations running product development efforts. His experience goes across all size companies, and many types of businesses in various industries. During his career Mr. Norton has helped created over $1 billion in new shareholder value just while at those companies. Mr. Norton provides expertise on growing small and medium size companies more rapidly using eleven different proprietary tools and methodologies for business design, development and optimization, which he has developed over the last fifteen years. Many ideas are also contributed from over 1,000 business books in his personal library. He also runs the premier CEO and Entrepreneur Boot Camp in the U.S. today, which is design to cut years off the learning curve of CEOs and entrepreneurs and turn them into world-class CEOs. This exclusive event teaches practical business design and optimization systems in an intensive 3-day training program for any CEO or entrepreneur.

Mr. Norton has appeared on CNBC, Good Morning America and many other regional and national media like Inc. magazine. He provides advice to entrepreneurs and CEOs through consulting, speaking, writing and seminars. He frequently speaks at corporations, associations, and universities on business topics.

These books are targeted at particular problems and stages of development where early-stage ventures commonly encounter critical issues while moving from raw startup with an idea to becoming an established company. They are guaranteed to improve any
business’s chances of success dramatically. They can be downloaded immediately and the ideas and systems put into action the same day. Unlike hardcover books, that need to be a certain size to justify the printing, distribution and retail markups, these books will not have lots of redundant information, essentially showcasing the same basic ideas five different ways. They are packed with totally unique content that comes from the experience of a real serial entrepreneur, not just an author who did some academic research, but practical advice and systems for CEOs and entrepreneurs proven to work over two decades. The philosophies and systems used in each are compatible so that, as a set, they will create a framework for successful and rapid business growth.

You can click on each book icon below for more complete information.

DESIGNING  LAUNCHING  HIRING  MANAGING  ALL FOURS BOOKS

The Startup Manual includes all four books plus our proprietary business design tools CD-ROM.
### Books and Tapes Order Form

(Click on Titles for Complete Information and online ordering)

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Appendix

Other Available Products to Help Your Business Grow More Rapidly

outside financing. It should save or make you many thousands of dollars.

(You may deduct $1.00 for each shipping and handling charge after the first item)

TOTAL CHARGES: $-

Click Here To Go To Our Complete online catalog of products for CEOs, entrepreneurs and Senior Executives.
Appendix

Other Available Products to Help Your Business Grow More Rapidly

Entrepreneur and CEO Boot Camp DVD Order Form
Available 8/1/2004

This is the premier training program for entrepreneurs and CEOs in the U.S. today. Almost 12 hours of video documenting a complete CEO and Entrepreneur Boot Camp weekend available by subject, or as a complete set. This is some of the best advice available today on launching and growing businesses from someone who has done it many times. You can replay them and share them with your entire team, which multiplies the power and impact on your company many fold. See video testimonials by clicking here.

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<td>8. Developing Your Team - The Skill Set Matrix, Management Methods and the Employee Development Ladder</td>
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<td>9. Operations and Customer Service – The Corporate Dashboard</td>
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<td>11. Everybody Needs a Branding Strategy</td>
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**The complete CEO and Entrepreneur Boot Camp DVD Set Contains All DVDs Listed Above.** Over 11 hours of the most valuable video you will ever watch. This package also includes the full 300 page manual with all slides, articles, our proprietary business design tools CD-ROM and plus a Rapid Growth By Design™ system wall poster that pulls it all together after you have listened to the entire set.

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**TOTAL:**

**Click Here or Call For CEO and Entrepreneur 3- Day Boot Camp Seminar Dates and Locations**

*in October, December, January (7 Day Caribbean Cruise) and March 2004*
## Appendix

Other Available Products to Help Your Business Grow More Rapidly

### Shipping and Billing Information

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FAX To: (801) 672-9640 Or Call (508) 381-1450

Note: All orders outside of the United States: Add five dollars for each video, nine dollars for each physical book, above regular shipping costs.
This complete collection of four eBooks is also available as a package at 30% off, with over 300 secrets of a serial entrepreneur and hundreds of pages of valuable "How To" content from someone who has done it before.

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Two Days That Will Change Your Life, **Accelerate Your Business, and Accelerate Your Career**
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Other Available Products to Help Your Business Grow More Rapidly

Learn How To Turn Any Enterprise Into A High-Growth $100 Million Business

In this intensive seminar, you will learn how to design and run businesses for high growth and profit from very successful, “been there, done that” experts. It is a complete integrated system for designing and running businesses compiled over 15 years from over 1,000 business books and field-tested. Experts offer you the most important systems, tips and techniques for success that they’ve learned during their distinguished careers, while also letting you know how to avoid many common business missteps by employing systems using the latest research, techniques and best practices available today.

Click Here For More Information If You are Online, or read more below.

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What is The CEO and Entrepreneur Boot Camp About?

Join Bob Norton, a serial entrepreneur who has grown two businesses to over $100 million in sales, for an intense two-day Boot Camp filled with 312 secrets on starting and running companies for fast growth. Learn to greatly improve your strategy, vision, business design, and management skills using a complete system developed over 15 years as a CEO incorporating some of the best ideas from 1,000 business books. You will learn to use 11 proprietary tools that will radically improve any business in any industry.

Nothing ever fully prepares you for stepping into the role of a CEO or Entrepreneur.

The Art and Science of Business Design details how to design, plan and manage each of any enterprise's key disciplines - Sales, Marketing, Finance, Operation and Product Development. As a CEO and Entrepreneur, you need to know how these departments interact and even compete. You need to know how to recruit, hire, motivate and manage

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the best people in each discipline. You must also know how to get them to work together so that everybody is on the same page.

In "The Art and Science of Business Design" you will learn to:

1. Design and position a business for more sustainable competitive advantage and higher barriers to entry.
2. Optimize your business model for minimum risk and capital investment.
3. Better define the exact skills you need on your team and learn how to select people and interview for skills you do not have yourself.
4. Raise capital in any market from the best sources without giving the company away.
5. Inject entrepreneurial spirit into ANY organization, large or small, and improve product development productivity by a factor of FIVE times the average or more.
6. Develop a marketing, communications and messaging plan, and a marketing department, that is accountable to a return on investment.
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8. Plan, design and manage a sales department and select strategies, tactics and channels that will work for your business.
9. Hire the best people in every area and understand what personality types work best in each business area to create superior results.
10. Adjust your management style, risk, appetite and executive decisions based on your company's stage of development as it grows from a raw startup to a significant business.
11. Manage employees and develop them into more valuable assets for your company's benefit and theirs.
12. And much, much more than what we can list here.

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Admission includes:

- A sure-fire business and career-booster that is not available anywhere else. The skills developed in this seminar will allow managers to move up in any organization
- A complete system that will bring high-growth to any business
Appendix

Other Available Products to Help Your Business Grow More Rapidly

- More cutting edge, how-to content than you'll find in some 3 to 5 day seminars
- Reference materials you'll use over and over again, including a complete 350+ page manual that includes all the slides, handouts and tools presented in the seminar
- A BONUS CD-ROM containing the key tools, forms and templates that could save thousands of dollars in expenses. (This is a $499 value sold separately)
- Each attendee will receive one hour of consulting from our President and Founder, Bob Norton, at our offices in Milford Massachusetts. This is a $400 value
- An e-book from our "Secrets of a Serial Entrepreneur Series". Four titles all written by Mr. Norton- even more will be available shortly
- Breakfast, lunch and snack break both days
- A 100% money-back guarantee (see web site for details)
- Free parking.