



THE LEADERSHIP INTERVIEW GUIDE

**15 Questions That Reveal
Leaders Who Can Run
Complex Systems**



HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE:

- **Select six to eight questions most relevant to the role**
- **Ask candidates to respond with specific examples, not hypotheticals**
- **Listen for patterns in thinking and behavior, not rehearsed answers**
- **Use the scoring rubric at the end to evaluate candidates consistently**

The goal is not to ask every question. The goal is to reveal judgment, leadership maturity, and system awareness.



SECTION 1:

Operational Judgement & Decision-Making

1

Tell me about a time an operational issue surfaced unexpectedly.

What was your first move, and why?

Reveals how the candidate responds under pressure

2

Describe a decision you made that improved operations but initially faced resistance.

How did you handle it?

Reveals leadership credibility and influence

3

When safety and performance goals conflict, how do you resolve that tension in practice?

Reveals values in real-world conditions



SECTION 2:

Systems Thinking & Complexity

4 **Walk me through how your function impacts upstream and downstream operations.**

Reveals system-level awareness

5 **Describe a time when a small operational issue created a larger downstream problem.**

How did you identify the root cause?

Reveals analytical depth and accountability

6 **How do you prioritize when multiple critical issues demand attention at the same time?**

Reveals strategic judgment and triage skills



SECTION 3:

**People
Leadership in
Demanding
Environments**

7

Tell me about a time you had to lead through fatigue, burnout, or morale challenges.

What worked and what did not?

Reveals empathy and resilience

8

How do you hold experienced operators accountable without damaging trust?

Reveals balance between authority and respect

9

Describe how you develop future leaders in shift-based or distributed teams.

Reveals long-term leadership mindset



SECTION 4:

Change, Growth & Adaptability

10

Tell me about a change initiative that did not go as planned.

What did you adjust along the way?

Reveals adaptability and self-awareness

11

How do you evaluate whether a process should be improved or completely rebuilt?

Reveals judgment, not rigidity

12

Describe a time when growth introduced new operational risk.

How did you manage it?

Reveals ability to scale responsibly



SECTION 5:

Accountability & Leadership Maturity

13

Tell me about a decision you would make differently today.

What did it teach you?

Reveals learning orientation and humility

14

How do you ensure problems surface early instead of being hidden?

Reveals culture-building capability

15

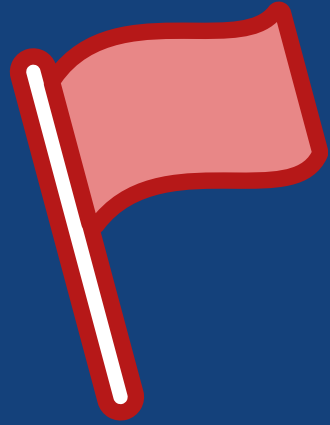
What signals tell you a system is healthy, even when performance metrics look good?

Reveals depth beyond dashboards



EVALUATING RESPONSES: GREEN FLAGS

- **Speaks in specific examples rather than generalities**
- **Owens mistakes without deflecting blame**
- **Connects decisions to system-wide impact**
- **References both people and process**
- **Demonstrates respect for frontline experience**



EVALUATING RESPONSES: RED FLAGS

- **Blames previous teams or leadership**
- **Relies heavily on title or authority**
- **Avoids discussing failure or learning moments**
- **Focuses only on metrics, not behaviors**
- **Shows limited awareness of downstream consequences**



SCORING RUBRIC:

Rate each response on a 1–5 scale:

- **1: Vague, theoretical, or deflective**
- **3: Solid experience with moderate depth**
- **5: Clear judgment, ownership, and systems thinking**

Evaluate across five dimensions:

- **Operational judgment**
- **Systems thinking**
- **People leadership**
- **Adaptability**
- **Accountability**

Using a consistent rubric helps reduce bias and improves hiring decisions across interviewers.



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