

# **BRIDGE INVESTMENT GROUP**

## **Veterans Interviewing Tips**

This guide is designed to help you successfully interview transitioning and past service personnel for roles at Bridge. It is designed to help you not only understand the candidates' abilities, skills and strengths but ensure a great experience for the candidate that focuses on engagement and understanding.

**When developing your interview plan/questions for a veteran interview remember that the candidate you are meeting spent years of their life serving a purpose and mission, this feeling is (often) not replicated in the commercial sector, so keep in mind that the candidate is likely now seeking a career that also has meaning and impact, and one that utilizes their skills and talents.**

## **Performance Based Interview**

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recommends using Performance Based Interviewing (PBI) as a method to increase the effectiveness of the interviewing process when hiring veterans. With PBI, you as the interviewer should carefully define the skills needed for the job and then structure the interview questions gain specific behavioral examples of past performance.

Research findings show that the best predictor of future behavior is past behavior. The job-related questions will help you better evaluate applicants fairly based on their skills and past success.

## **Question Ideas/Examples**

Interviewing is a skill and one that we must continually work to develop and hone. One of the best tips for interviewing is to keep questions, simple, broad, and open. Asking a candidate open question (especially a veteran) will often allow you to gain significantly more insight into their abilities, skills, and personality than closed skill-based questions.

Ensure you are tailoring your questions effectively, especially when interviewing transitioning personnel, remember they may not have corporate or "customer" facing examples to give but they do have translatable experience, for example:

If you are looking for insight into Customer Service abilities you may ask a question like:

***Tell me about a situation where you realized a person needed help, how did you recognize this and what did you do? What was the outcome?***

\*Remember that the rules and culture of military service often differ from civilian roles, your job is to determine if the candidate you are meeting can adapt and differentiate these situations.

Below are some examples with explanation of questions you may want to include in interviews with veterans or any candidate.

- **Tell me about yourself.** This question opens the door to a story and insights that may not be reflected on the resume.
  1. When answering this question, the candidate will hopefully share insight into their past career choices, their job progression through the military, and those aspects of their work they value highest.
  2. If they do not answer in this way, consider following up with this question, *“Can you relate your military career to what you want to do next?”*
- **Tell me about an accomplishment you weren’t sure you could achieve, but you did.** In this question, you uncover humility. What are they most proud of? How do they acknowledge their accomplishments?
  1. A veteran will typically shy away from taking credit for success if others were involved. Be careful assuming this means they are insecure. The military teaches them to focus on the value of the collective over their own needs.
- **What would others say about your work ethic?** Listen for words like, “integrity, dedicated, reliable, hard-working, etc.”
  1. Veterans are taught a very strong work ethic in the military.
- **What is your most significant career accomplishment so far?** This question may solicit a military-specific response.
  1. If the context of the response is not clear to you (because you weren’t in the military) ask them to clarify.
  2. Listen for qualities of leadership, problem-solving, resilience and adaptability.
- **What are three words you would use to describe yourself at work.** Similar to #2, it may feel awkward to your veteran job applicant to talk about themselves, particularly in favorable ways (which they will assume you want to hear.)
  1. Listen for patterns throughout the interview which can be amplified with the words they describe themselves with.
  2. This can offer insight into what they believe to be their most important qualities, talents and skills.
- **Describe a time when your actions helped your team succeed.** Keep in mind that in the military, tasks are often performed as a unit. This question provides an opportunity to talk about what the candidate accomplished with their team and an opening to elaborate on their personal accomplishments. What to look for in an answer:
  1. Ability to work well with others  
Critical thinking skills  
Problem-solving with proven results
- **How did your time in the service influence your current career goals?** Most veterans have operated under one or more military operation specialty (MOS) codes during their time in the service. By asking this, the candidate has a chance to put their education and experience into the context of the job they’re applying for. What to look for in an answer:
  1. Examples of experience relevant to the position
  2. Current career goals
  3. Demonstration of a clear career trajectory

- **Describe your process for handling an unexpected situation at work.** Military training provides veterans with the framework for dealing with difficult situations. This question will give the interviewer an idea of how the candidate reacts to unforeseen circumstances and how keen their problem-solving skills are. What to look for in an answer:
  1. Adaptability
  2. The ability to ask for help and find solutions independently
  3. Calmness and maturity in the face of pressure
- **What was the most difficult feedback you've ever received?** Veteran interview questions need to reflect both the successes and failures of the applicant. By probing about negative feedback, the applicant has received, the interviewer may determine how receptive they are to constructive critiques. What to look for in an answer:
  1. Willingness to solve problems
  2. Accountability for mistakes or attitude
  3. Ability to grow from a negative experience
- **How would you react if a coworker caused a major setback to a project you were working on?** In the military, if one person falls behind, it affects the entire team. This question allows the interviewer to gauge the candidate's ability to handle setbacks with grace. What to look for in an answer:
  1. Maturity and professionalism
  2. Ability to be patient with others
  3. Willingness to help where needed

### **What NOT to ask during the interview process**

As important as it is to know in advance what interview questions to ask, it is equally important to understand what you legally cannot ask. When interviewing veterans we must avoid questions related to the candidate's type of discharge, current military status, and potential disabilities.

- You should never ask anything that requires the veteran to give their discharge status.
- You should avoid questions pertaining to an applicant's military status for example asking a National Guardsman if they will be deployed soon
- If you are interviewing a wounded warrior, refrain from asking questions that would require them to disclose any disabilities.
- It is ok and encouraged, to ask the applicant if they have read the job description and can fulfill the minimum job requirements. However, questioning an applicant on their disability or trying to uncover PTSD or a traumatic brain injury is a direct violation of the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act as well as the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- Have you ever killed anyone? – this one should be obvious, but this question is inappropriate, insensitive and unnecessary.