

GUIDE 2 OF 4

The interview kit

Questions a non-technical interviewer can ask and actually judge the answers to, and the shape of the hour they sit in.

WHO THIS IS FOR

Founders, owners and managers hiring a technical person without being one themselves.

Questions a non-technical interviewer can ask and actually judge the answers to. You are not testing whether they know more than you — they do. You are testing whether they can think, explain and be honest.

Role: · **Level:** · **Prepared:**

The shape of the conversation (60 minutes)

MINUTES	WHAT HAPPENS	WHAT YOU ARE LOOKING FOR
0–5	You describe the business and the role honestly, problems included	Do they lean in, or go quiet
5–20	Their past work, one project in depth	Decisions and trade-offs, not tool names
20–40	The exercise below, out loud, together	How they think when they do not know
40–50	Their questions for you	What they care about
50–60	Money, notice period, next step	No surprises later

Part 1 · Their past work

Pick one project they name and stay on it. Depth beats breadth.

1. **"Walk me through something you built that you are proud of. Start with why it existed."** *Good:* starts with the problem and who had it. *Weak:* starts with the technology.
2. **"What did you decide that you could have decided differently?"** *Good:* a real fork, both options, why they chose. *Weak:* "nothing, it went well."
3. **"What broke after it went live?"** *Good:* specific, owns their part, says what they changed. *Weak:* nothing ever broke.
4. **"Which part of it was yours, and which part was someone else's?"** *Good:* clear boundaries, credits others. *Weak:* "we" for everything, or "I" for everything.
5. **"If you had to hand it to someone else tomorrow, what would they struggle with?"** *Good:* knows where the mess is. *Weak:* claims it is all clean.

Part 2 · The exercise, done out loud

Describe a real problem from **your** business in two or three sentences. Do not give them a puzzle; give them your actual Tuesday. Then ask them to think aloud. Deliberately leave something out.

Example shape: "Orders come in on WhatsApp, someone copies them into a spreadsheet, and the warehouse reads that spreadsheet. Two people spend a morning a day on it and we still ship the wrong thing about once a week. How would you look at this?"

Score this, not the answer: – Did they ask questions before proposing anything? (*The best candidates ask three or four.*) – Did they notice what you left out? – Did they propose the smallest useful step, or a rebuild? – Did they say what it would cost to run, not only to build? – Did they mention the people who do the work today? – When you pushed back, did they defend it or fold instantly? (*Both are bad. You want "let me check".*)

Part 3 · Four questions that reveal the most

6. **"Explain [something from your business] back to me as you now understand it."** Tests listening, and whether they can speak without jargon.

7. **"Teach me one thing I should understand about this work, in two minutes."** *Good:* picks something that matters to you. *Weak:* a lecture, or a tool tour.
8. **"What would you want to change in your first month, and what would you leave alone?"** *Good:* leaves things alone. *Weak:* wants to rewrite everything.
9. **"What is something you believed two years ago and no longer do?"** *Good:* a real change of mind. *Weak:* cannot think of one.

Part 4 · What their questions tell you

Write down what they ask you. – **Asks about customers, the plan, who decides** → thinking like an owner. – **Asks about the team, review, how decisions get made** → will fit or will tell you why not. – **Asks only about salary, title, leave** → not disqualifying, but nothing else is pulling them. – **Asks nothing** → the strongest signal on this page. Nobody good is incurious.

Things not to do

- Do not ask trivia you found on the internet. You cannot judge the answer, and they know it.
- Do not let them interview you for fifty minutes. Warm is not the same as good.
- Do not hire the person who made you feel clever. Hire the one who made you understand.
- Do not skip the exercise because the conversation was pleasant. **This is the mistake that costs a year.**
- Do not decide alone if you can avoid it. Two scorecards, filled separately, then compared.

Take-home work, if you use it

- Two hours maximum, and say so. Longer is unpaid work and good candidates decline.
- Pay for anything longer. It says more about you than any question here.
- Judge the questions they asked before starting, and the notes they left behind — not the polish.

Reference calls — three questions

1. "What did they own, exactly?"
2. "What did they need help with?"
3. "Would you have them back? If a role came up next month, which one?"

(A silence after question 3 is an answer.)