

Interview Question #1: You discover an error that a colleague has made that could cause significant impact to the organization. What do you do?

This question allows you to see how effectively the candidate assesses the scenario. Can they determine a reasonable timeline for informing upper management of the error, and do they offer a unified front with their colleague when it comes to that conversation? How your prospective finance manager answers this question will reveal their views on leadership – invaluable information when you are trying to make a hiring decision.

Interview Question #2: When have you been the happiest working with a manager? Why?

This question is useful in determining behavioural traits. The way a prospective candidate likes to be managed offers insight into their core values. For example, if they speak highly about a manager who offered them flexibility and independence, and you know that this will not work for your team, then this particular hire is not suitable for your organization.

Interview Question #3: Even if you were generally happy with a former manager, go back to a time when you were not as content. Why was this the case? Did the situation improve? Why?

A multi-part question such as this will reveal how your prospective finance manager navigates challenging waters. Do they rise to the occasion, communicate clearly and foster win-win partnerships, or are they more likely to say nothing and carry-on. Ultimately, a finance manager is a liaison to several different departments, supporting them to achieve their strategic objectives, while managing their own team. You need a strong problem solver and communicator in this role.

Interview Question #4: Why does this role make sense for you at this point in your career?

An interview question such as this assesses whether the candidate thinks analytically about his or her career. Are they making a decision that will help them stay at the company long-term? Fundamentally, you want someone who is invested in the role and the organization.

Interview Question #5: What do you think the difference is between a manager and a leader?

Finance managers must be able to plan, organize and coordinate the various moving parts of the finance department. A true leader, however, also connects people to the vision of their organization and empowers them to achieve it. A leader is transformative, establishes a culture of continuous improvement and inspires those around them.

A finance manager plays a critical role in the success of the company. Ask questions designed to determine core values, as much as technical skill. Hire a leader, not just a manager and make sure their values align with the core values of the company. Asking these top five questions will help you ensure that your candidate of choice will be a forward thinking asset for your organization for years to come.

1. What deliverables should I shoot for in the first 30, 60 and 90 days, respectively?

A prospective employer or hiring manager will typically use the interview to give a broad idea both of what the position entails, and of what skills, qualities, and personality they're looking for in a successful candidate.

But interviewers tend to be coy about how precisely a new hire's performance will be evaluated in the early-going – that is, what specific, concrete benchmarks they'll need to reach in order to meet expectations and survive beyond the probationary period.

...to succeed in a job interview, you need to win over the interviewer not only with great answers, but also with great questions.

For example, a company may want its new assistant controller to be regularly liaising with upper management on information technology issues, as early as a month into the job. But that may not always be something they spell out upfront.

When starting a new position, it always pays to get some quick wins right away. Making sure you're totally clear about what's expected of you – and when – is half the battle.

2. How does this particular role support you?

It's important to understand where the job you're after is located on the company totem pole, and how your role would be linked to that of the individual you'd be reporting to (who in most cases will also be the person interviewing you).

Your prospective supervisor will in all likelihood have their own ideas about how a new hire will make *their* job easier, so be sure to ask them directly about how they see you supporting them. Plus, you'll likely earn bonus points by exhibiting an appropriate level of deference.

3. What doesn't work here?

Instead of asking how you might succeed in the role, try a different tack and ask about how others have struggled in it. Why have previous employees failed to deliver in the job, or at the company?

Everyone and their mother claims to be a team player on their resume. It's a tired cliché (almost as trite as "I'm a fast learner").

This will help you draw back the curtain on your employer's values and preferences in a successful hire. It will also demonstrate to the interviewer that you intend to learn from the mistakes of others, in order to avoid them.

4. Who will the winning candidate be interacting with most regularly, and how are they best supported?

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But by inquiring into who you'll be working with on a regular basis and how you can best serve them, you can go beyond the stock replies about teamwork and show the interviewer that you're truly committed to the good of the group.

Further, if you do end up getting the job, receiving clarification on this point will help you avoid potential conflicts or misunderstandings with your future colleagues.

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5. At the end of the year, what will success in this job look like?

Beyond the preliminary deliverables, it's important to understand what the employer expects from the winning candidate over the longer haul – after their first, full year, for example, once all the attendant kinks have been worked out and the learning curves mastered.

With the employer painting the picture for you, you'll be able to visualize how all your skills and experiences could help you reach that landmark.

And hey, if you play your cards right and ask the appropriate questions, the employer may just be picturing you there, too.