Interviewing a potential manager is different from questioning a front-line office worker. The manager will be supervising, mentoring, guiding, shaping and evaluating their employee at various times in the relationship. They also have a finger on the pulse of culture, if they’re doing their job well, and a vision towards the future.

Moreover, bottom line accountability often rolls up to them.

The following 15 questions can help identify characteristics, traits, information, knowledge and behavior patterns that will help you learn if the next management candidate is a fit for your company’s goals.

### 1. How would you describe the culture in your department/division/business unit? Why?

**Why It Works:**

The manager’s reflectiveness (or lack thereof) in responding to this question will indicate whether they are indeed in touch with the idea of building a great culture or have been so busy in the weeds of the day to day that culture hasn’t been a priority.

### 2. How would your employees describe the culture in your department/division/business unit? Why?

**Why It Works:**

Similarly, if the manager is stumped or slow to respond, it might be they haven’t given this topic much thought. However, if they are quick to reveal, with enthusiasm, that the individuals on their team would espouse a positive, empowerment culture where they are safe to express opinions and take calculated risks, for example, then you probably are interviewing a manager who gets the importance of shaping a meaningful and employee-centered culture.
3 What was one of the most difficult-to-achieve, but gratifying milestones in your career?

Why It Works:

The answer to this question will help determine what motivates this management candidate in their career, what it is that gives them a sense of growth and satisfaction. This is helpful in assessing whether the candidate will sustain satisfaction in the particular environment for which you are assessing them.

4 What would your highest performing employee say about you?

5 What would your most struggling employee say about you?

Why It Works:

In both the above instances, there is fertile opportunity to unearth how in touch the manager is with their employees' development, successes, opportunities to improve, etc. Their answers provide insight into their mentoring and coaching skills, as well as empathy.

6 Tell me about a time when you had a major objective to achieve under a tight time constraint, lean budget and with fewer people than typically would support the goal? How did you overcome the challenges to achieve the necessary outcome? What was the measurable result(s)?

Why It Works:

This question homes in on the core value of a manager — their ability to manage, allocate and leverage resources (people, time, money). It also speaks to their flexibility in handling imperfect scenarios, successfully.
15 Questions to Ask When Hiring a Manager

7. In your most recent role, what was your overarching impact? i.e., how did you help the company grow, gain market share, increase client base, improve profitability?

**Why It Works:**

This question ferrets out the manager’s bottom-line impact, and can be followed with ...

8. What are 2-3 key achievements that led to the overarching impact?

**Why It Works:**

Ask the candidate to answer questions 7 and 8 for their past 2-3 positions, to help uncover a theme — do they consistently make positive contributions at their organizations? Figuring this out will help you understand how they might be able to benefit your own company.

9. Whom have you promoted, and why? Do you have a process for mentoring and developing your employees?

**Why It Works:**

Again, this speaks to their people management, coaching and mentoring skills and the ability to respond to their team members’ needs and goals.
10. What was the biggest failure you had in your most recent role? Prior 2-3 roles? How did you respond to the situation? What did you learn?

**Why It Works:**

This question will help identify the manager’s capacity to admit mistakes as well as how they respond to and learn from them, imperative to their long-term success.

11. What was your biggest takeaway from your last 3 roles? How do those takeaways (skills; abilities; techniques; information; learnings about ‘what not to do’; learnings about best practices; learnings about people and how to manage better or differently), impact your value proposition going forward? In short, why will it matter to me (the hiring company)?

**Why It Works:**

Not only will this question provide insight as to specific skills and experiences the manager has gained along their career journey — it will also reveal how they are able to connect the dots with their go-forward goals, and specifically, how that will add value to your organization.

12. How would you describe your management style?

**Why It Works:**

This question gets to the heart of the candidate. Where do their words focus: on the employees/teams; on the company; on themselves; equally divided among the three? Are they hands-on; hands-off; a mix of the two; concerned about building a happy place to work; etc.?
13 How would your employees describe your management style?

Why It Works:

It is interesting and beneficial to see how in-sync the answers to questions 12 and 13 are.

14 Tell me about a time when you achieved a breakthrough result that is not directly quantifiable, but which has had a monumental impact on the company's goals.

Why It Works:

While this is a bit of a brainteaser, the ultimate goal is to unleash the candidate's creative juices beyond proving their bottom-line value. For example, perhaps the interviewing company has ambitions to break out into a more visible force in the community, beyond being a service or widget provider. If the candidate is able to share stories where they expanded the visibility and presence in a community service sort of way, beyond the bottom line, then they would be showing how they could fulfill a particular need the hiring company wants to satisfy.

15 What is your favorite technology and/or digital tool, and why? How has it supported your goals as a manager?

Why It Works:

With today's ever-evolving technology landscape, including AI, social media, etc., it is important to assess a manager's touchpoints in these areas.