

Interviewing for Heart

by Bob & Gregg Vanourek

(excerpt from *Triple Crown Leadership*, chapter 2)

The first step in triple crown leadership is putting together a triple crown team. Triple crown leaders devote rigorous attention to recruiting for, developing, and rewarding both head and heart. Head involves the knowledge, skills, and experience necessary for the work. Heart involves integrity, emotional intelligence, and fit with the desired culture of character. People deficient in either do not make the cut.

Chapter Supplement: Interviewing for Heart

In addition to the normal questions about educational background, work experience, knowledge, and skills, here are some examples of questions that can help assess a person's character and cultural fit:*

1. What do you know about the culture of our organization?
2. How do you fit with our culture? *(If the interviewees are not familiar with the culture, describe it in detail. Then ask again how they think they fit.)*
3. What were two of your most important formative experiences? How did they affect you?
4. Who are the people who have influenced you the most, and how?
5. Describe two humbling experiences you have had. What did you learn from them?
6. What mistakes have you made, and what did you learn from them?
7. What personal characteristics do you struggle with? How do you address them?
8. What are your personal values (your core beliefs or guiding principles)?
9. Have you ever fought for an ethical belief or principle? Explain.
10. What leadership experience have you had? Tell us about one good example and one bad example. What do you learn from them?
11. How do you approach leadership?
12. Why do you want to lead?
13. Why do you want to work here? *(Probe for the real reasons. See if they get beyond talking points and platitudes.)*
14. What are the most important things in your life and why?
15. What is the single most important thing I should remember about you after you leave?

(Note if you are getting canned responses or seeing any red flags, especially any hints of ego—such as focusing too much on “I” in work stories, as opposed to “we.”)

* We recommend consulting with legal counsel and/or human resources officials and remaining mindful of privacy and legal restrictions when determining which questions to ask.

Bob and Gregg Vanourek, father and son, are co-authors of the new book, Triple Crown Leadership: Building Excellent, Ethical, and Enduring Organizations. Bob has been CEO or a senior officer at numerous public companies and a university leadership instructor. Gregg has co-authored three books and teaches at the Stockholm School of Entrepreneurship and Royal Institute of Technology.

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