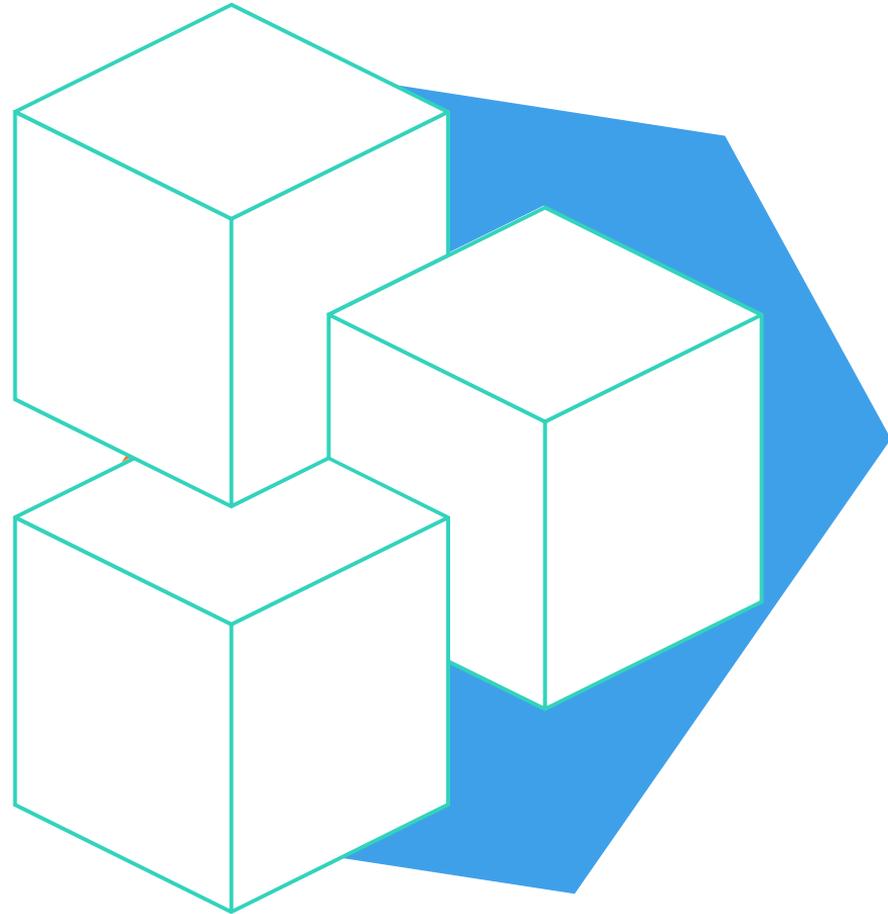
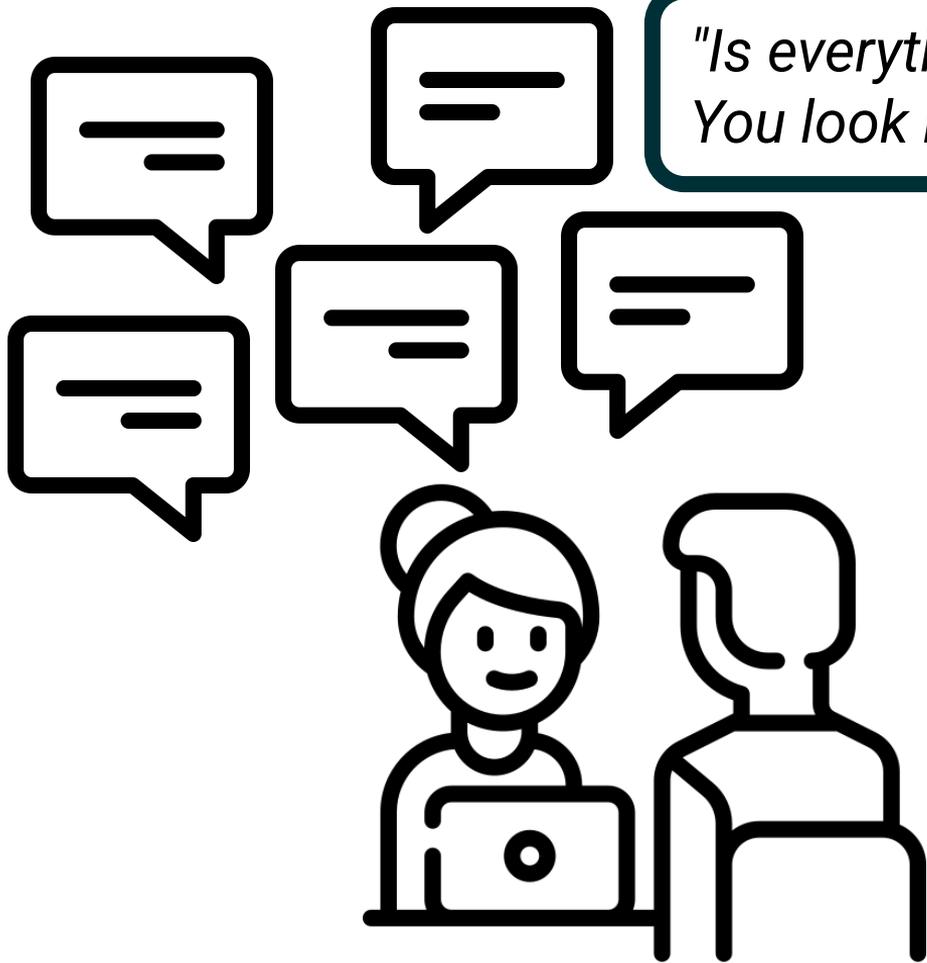


Leveling Up in Job Interviews

Philipp Hauer



*"Is everything alright?
You look bored."*





Hands Up

Who is interviewing candidates from time to time?



Disclaimer

Subjective, based on my experiences, my opinion and approach



Big Picture and Agenda



Big Picture And Agenda

Define Required Skills and Traits



Assess the Skills and Traits



Interview Guide

Preparation for Candidates

Interviews in AI Era



Define Required Skills and Traits



Skill Types

Hard Skills, Tech Skills

- Java
- Kotlin
- Spring Boot
- Distributed Systems/MS
- MySQL
- MongoDB
- Docker
- K8s
- Architecture
- Testing

Soft Skills and Traits

- Motivation
- Curiosity
- Communication Skills
- Team Work, Collaboration Skills
- Culture Fit, Team Fit, Culture-Add
- Willingness to learn, Fast-Learner
- Empathy and Kindness
- Initiative and Leadership
- Self-Reflection, Humility
- Alignment with Company Values
- Problem-Solving, Analytical Skills

That's too much!

Let's focus on the most important skills.



Let's Prioritize

Hard Skills, Tech Skills

1. **Java**
2. **Distributed Systems/MS**
3. Spring Boot
4. Kotlin
5. MySQL
6. MongoDB
7. Docker
8. K8s
9. Architecture
10. Testing

Soft Skills and Traits

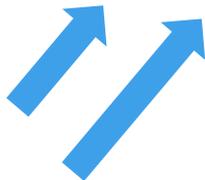
1. **Team Work, Collaboration Skills**
2. **Communication Skills**
3. **Curiosity**
4. Culture Fit, Team Fit, Culture-Add
5. Empathy and Kindness
6. Initiative and Leadership
7. Self-Reflection, Humility
8. Alignment with Company Values
9. Problem-Solving, Analytical Skills



Our Approaches

Let's ask questions about that!

1. **Java**
2. **Distributed Systems/MS**



1. **Team Work, Collaboration Skills**
2. **Communication Skills**
3. **Curiosity**



Observe candidate;
Read between the lines



Assess the Skills and Traits

Part 1: Tech Stack

Technical Skills:

- **Language:** Java, Kotlin, C#, C, C++, JavaScript
- **Framework/Technologies:** J2EE, Spring+ (Spring MVC, Spring Batch, Spring AOP, Spring Security, Spring Cloud, Spring WebFlux, Spring Serverless), Spring Boot, Netflix OSS, Netflix Cloud APIs (Eureka, Ribbon, Hystrix, Zuul), OAuth2, Apache Kafka, Apache Active MQ, Rabbit MQ, JMS, Hibernate, Android, Android NDK, Angular JS, Thymeleaf, ELK Stack (Elasticsearch, Logstash, and Kibana)
- **Database(s):** MS SQL Server, DB2, PostgreSQL, Mongo DB, Neo4j, SQLite, Redis
- **Development Tools:** IntelliJ IDEA, STS, Android Studio, Net Beans, Eclipse
- **Versioning Tools:** GIT, SVN
- **CI Tools:** TeamCity, Jenkins, Bamboo
- **Build Tools:** Maven, Gradle
- **Container Tools:** Docker, Kubernetes
- **Project Tools:** Jira, ZOHO, Mentis
- **Servers:** Apache Tomcat, Liberty WebSphere, Netty
- **Protocols:** TCP/IP, UDP, Web Socket, RSocket, MQTT, AQMP, BLE, Wi-Fi
- **Test Tools:** Apache JMeter, LISA Test, Postman, Junit, Mockito, PowerMock, Artillery
- **Cloud:** AWS (API Gateway, Lambda, SQS, DynamoDB, Event Bridge, SNS, CloudWatch, SecretManager, Amplify, S3, Authorization), MS Azure (Functions, API Management, Data Factory, AD, Blob, Azure RDBMS), Spring Cloud, Firebase
- **Other:** Microsoft Visio, Draw IO
- Extensive experience in implementing Micro Services based architectures, API gateways, Edge services, REST versioning, REST standards, Event Driven Services, Modular Design Patterns, OOP methodologies - inheritance, encapsulation, Polymorphism, MVC frame works and Web Services/API.

BUZZWORDS

BUZZWORDS EVERYWHERE



Checking the CV's Tech Stack

Microservices

- "When would you use Microservices?"
- "What have been the challenges you faced in the past with MS?"



Tips for Candidates: Tech Stack

- Be humble and honest in your CV and interview → reveals important traits
- Focus on what you are familiar with as of today.
- Be prepared to answer digging questions



Tips for Interviewers: Tech Stack

- Take the CV's tech stack with a grain of salt
- Prepare questions to check the candidate's knowledge



Assess the Skills and Traits

Part 2: Soft Skills: Questions

“Are You a Team
Player?”



"Sure, I am!"

“Let's assume you argue with a teammate in a code review. You disagree with their code changes. How do you handle that?”

“Tell me about a time
you had a conflict with a
teammate.”



Common Question Patterns

Hypothetical
Questions

“Let's assume/imagine
you... What would you do?”

Experience
Questions

“Tell me about
a time you...”



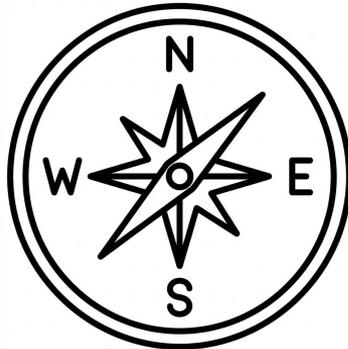
STAR Technique

STAR = Situation - Task - Action - Result

Situation/Task Tell me about a time you failed at a project.

Action What did you do to avoid failure?

Result What did that experience teach you?



Navigating through
candidate's answers



Tips for Candidates: Soft Skill Questions

- Prepare examples for situations that might be relevant for the role
- Apply STAR technique
 - What were *your* concrete actions and impact?
 - What did you learn? What would you do differently now?



Tips for Interviewers: Soft Skill Questions

- Ask open questions that kick off a conversation
- Use hypothetical or experience questions
- STAR to dig deeper and get more concrete answers



Assess the Skills and Traits

Part 3: Soft Skills: Observing During the Interview



Trait Curiosity



Direct Questions:

- "Do you have any questions?"
- Proxy questions e.g. "Latest Java Feature"



Observe Behavior

- They ask many questions during the interview
- They flip questions

**Red Flag:
No Questions**





Reverse Interviewing

Examples:

- What will be my biggest challenge (or pain point) in this role?
- Assuming I join, what advice would you give for being successful?
- What does success look like for this role?
- How will success be measured?
- What are your expectations for this role?
- Why are you still working for COMPANY? Is there something you don't like?



Tips for Candidates:

Soft Skills: Observing

- Prepare Questions for the "reverse interview"
 - What is important for you at work?
 - Inspiration: 4 P

Product

Platform
and Tech

People and
Culture

Process

- Flip questions that matters to you.

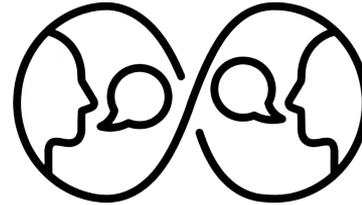


Trait Communication and Collaboration

Signals:



They ask for
clarifications



We have a
fluent
conversation



Answers are
concise and on
point



Be Present, Listen Carefully, Answer on Point

“Would you mind briefly summarizing
your experience and talking about what
motivated you to search for something
new?”



Answers: Concise + Details on Demand

Q: "When would you use a Microservice Architecture?"

1. Answer concisely

A: "Mainly, to scale our development department." <short description>

2. Offer details

"There are more benefits and trade-offs. I can elaborate if you like."



Tips for Candidates: Soft Skills: Observing

- Have a conversation
- Ask for clarifications
- Be on point
- Provide details on demand
- Listen carefully to the question
- The questions might be open and ambiguous on purpose



Tips for Interviewers: Soft Skills: Observing

- Good conversation > Following your plan
- Ask open questions with some uncertainty and ambiguity
- Follow up on what the candidate said and embrace conversation.



Trait **Openness** and Culture Fit

In my spare time, I

I'm a family guy. I have a wife and two kids - so I don't have any problems with too much spare time :-)

Shows openness and creates trustful environment
Leak some of your personality → Icebreaker



Tips for Candidates

- Optional: Leak your personality



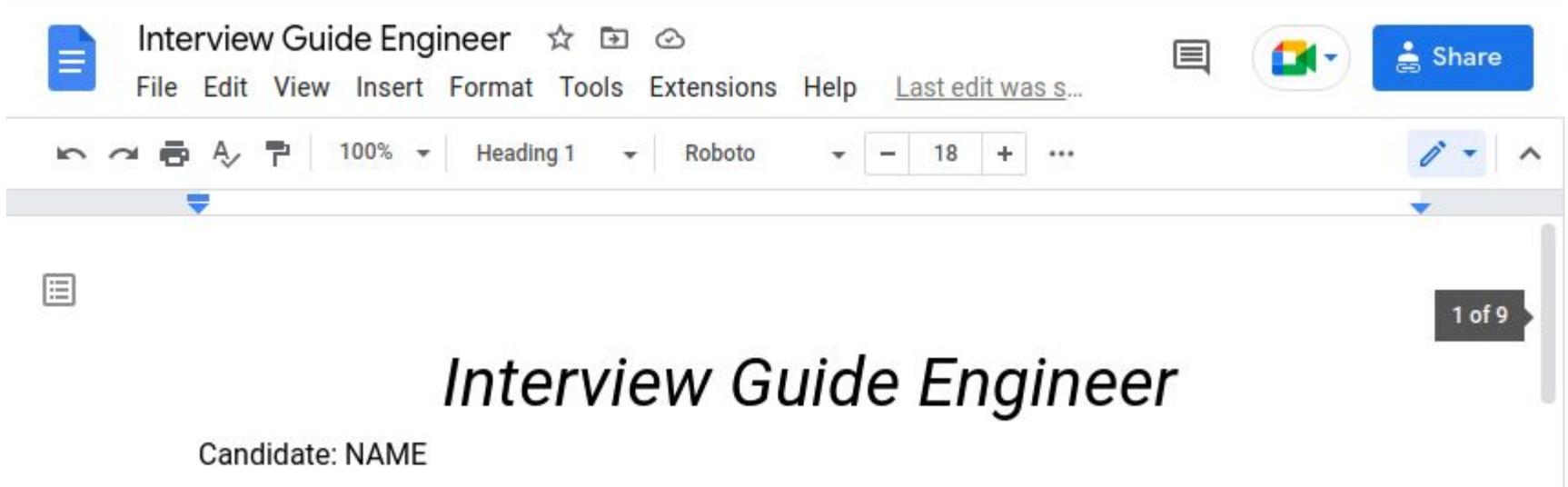
Tips for Interviewers

- Leaking a personal fact might open up the candidate and demonstrate an open culture.



Interview Guide

Interview Guide



The image shows a Google Docs interface. At the top, the document title is "Interview Guide Engineer" with icons for star, share, and cloud sync. Below the title is a menu bar with "File", "Edit", "View", "Insert", "Format", "Tools", "Extensions", and "Help". To the right of the menu bar are a chat icon, a Google Meet icon, and a blue "Share" button. Below the menu bar is a toolbar with icons for undo, redo, print, text color, background color, zoom (100%), heading (Heading 1), font (Roboto), font size (18), and a plus sign. On the right side of the toolbar are icons for a pencil and a caret. The main content area contains a large heading "Interview Guide Engineer" in a bold, italicized font, followed by the text "Candidate: NAME". On the right side of the main content area, there is a "1 of 9" page indicator.

Interview Guide Engineer ☆ ↗ ☁

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📄

Interview Guide Engineer

Candidate: NAME

1 of 9

Interview Guide

Space for your
notes during
the interview

Skill you are
looking for



Motivation
Attention, Tailored Answer, and Having a
Conversation (vs Reciting a Template Answer)

The
Question



Would you mind *briefly summarizing* your
experience and talking about what *motivated*
you to search for something new?

→ do you hear a prepared intro template?
“briefly”? Talked about motivation?



Aspects you might
pay attention to





Preparation for Candidates



Prepare For an Interview

Create a Knowledge Base

- Past or googled interview questions and **your written answer** to them.
- Reflect about your past projects, challenges, conflicts, failures and lessons learned
- Prepare reverse questions



Interview Preparation

Pages

 [Interview Questions and My Answers](#)

 [Reverse Questions](#)

 [Management Challenges, Learnings, Failures, Success](#)

 [Manager's Path: Notes](#)

 [The 4 Ps of Engineering Leadership](#)

My knowledge database in Notion



Tip: Brain Dump Asked Questions After Interview

Write Down Asked Questions



Question
Catalog



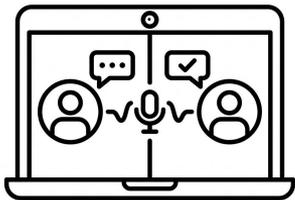
Preparation of Next Interview



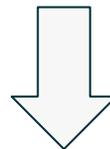
Interviewing In The AI Era



Interviewing in AI Era: Interview Process



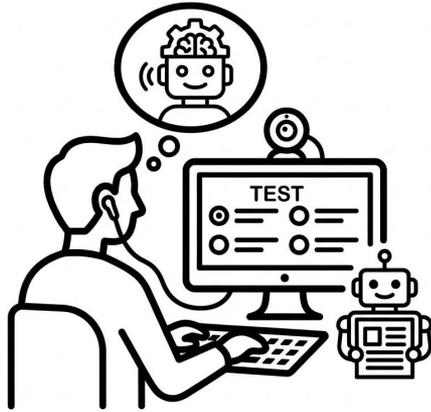
**More
in-person
interview
steps**



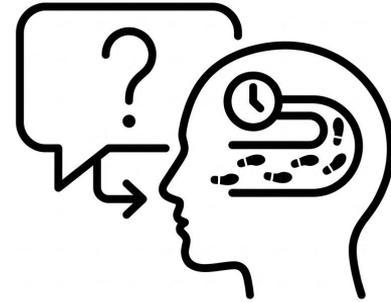
**Less coding
tasks as
homework**



Interviewing in AI Era: When Interviewing Candidates



**Spotting
cheating**



**Focus on
experience-based
questions**



Summary

Prepare examples
(using STAR)

Write down the
answers to
interview questions

Prepare reverse
questions



Candidate

Have a conversation,
clarify, flip

Listen carefully

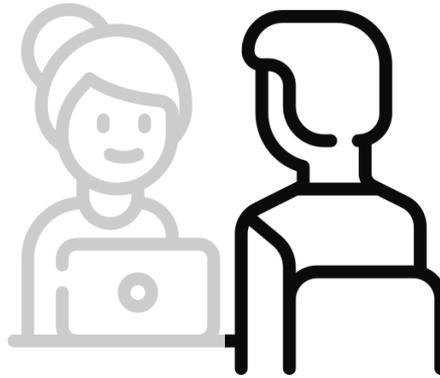
Concise answers;
Offer details on
demand

Leak your
personality

Start with the required
skills and traits
Then, assign questions

Check CV's
Tech Stack

Hypothetical or
experience
questions



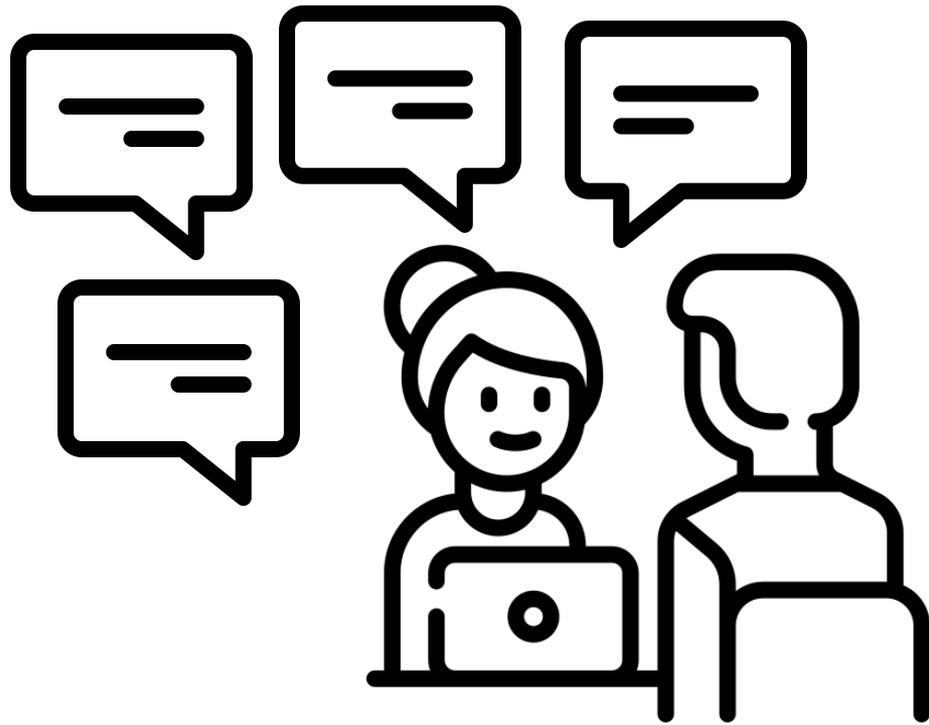
Interviewer

Follow up using STAR

Observe the
candidate, train
observation muscles

Interview Guide

Leak your personality



You always gain. Always.



Thank you!

Philipp Hauer
commercetools