INTERVIEW WORKBOOK

The Example Interview Workbook

Making Quick, Fair Decisions

We really want our interviews to be fair to every candidate, and to make our decision making easy and unbiased — here's the three-stage process, the templates and the questions we use to get there.

THE PROCESS

Overview

We recommend a three-stage process that filters candidates as you go — from long-listed, to interested, to interested and interesting, right through to being part of the team. This booklet covers a structured interview template for that first proper conversation, guidance for running an unstructured final-stage interview, and a large bank of questions to draw on throughout.

1. Long-listed
2. Interested
3. Interesting
4. Selected
5. Signed

SCREENING CALL

Screening

The screening interview is your chance to work through the long-list and make quick yes-or-no calls on whether to progress someone to a first interview. Often a recruiter runs these on your behalf. Either way, keep it short: no more than 30 minutes, ideally 15-20, and under 10 minutes if it's clearly not a fit. The candidate should come prepared with questions of their own, and you should be ready to ask a handful about background, skills and expectations.

30 min **maximum for a screening call** — ideally 15-20 minutes, and under 10 if it's clearly not a fit.

Come away from every screening call with:

- [ ] **Some initial chemistry**
- [ ] **An idea of values and how they work**
- [ ] **An idea of whether they have the skills**
- [ ] **An idea of how excited they are about the role**
- [ ] **The 'nuts and bolts' — expectations, notice period, whether they're currently interviewing elsewhere, etc.**

Top tip: use an AI notetaker like Metaview. It frees you up to actually listen, and lets you build templates for your notes so every candidate is assessed the same way.

TEMPLATE

Screening Template

Ice breakers give the candidate a chance to relax and be at their best. What you're really listening for is initial chemistry — a good candidate will ask a question back and respond warmly when you ask how their day is going.

- How has your day/week been?
- How's everything going?

Entry questions tell you whether the candidate has properly understood the role. This is also their unprompted opportunity to ask questions and start making the case for why they're a fit.

- Did you have a chance to read the job description? Any thoughts?
- What do you think of the opportunity?
- Have you understood everything about the job role?

- What made you apply for the role / respond to our outreach?

'Tell me' questions are deliberately broad — you're after concrete examples of what the candidate is doing now, or what they expect to be doing in the new role, to gauge initial competency fit and how well they understand the challenges ahead.

- Tell me about your current role.
- Tell me what you think of our company.
- Tell me about the challenges you face in your current role.
- Tell me about the challenges you think you'll face in this new role.

We always like to follow up with a probing question — something that makes the candidate think on their feet, possibly something they weren't expecting.

- What is your greatest achievement in your current role?
- What developments do you see in PPC/SEO/etc. that will affect your role?
- What was your greatest mistake?

Character and value questions can feel a bit clichéd, and that's fine — candidates don't often get asked this kind of thing at screening stage, but it's a useful window into how aligned they are with your own values.

- What's your one biggest value?
- What would others say about you?
- What motivates you?
- How would we get the best out of you?

Essential questions get the practicalities on record early, straightforwardly, so they don't become a problem later at the negotiation stage.

- What salary are you looking for?
- What notice period do you have?

- Are you involved in any other interview processes? And if so, at what stage are you?

FIRST INTERVIEW

Structured Interviews

Structured interviews are best for the first interview phase, where you want to assess every candidate equally and fairly against the same script. The goal is a repeatable, consistent structure that lets you score candidates against the skills and values the role actually needs.

Before you run a structured interview:

- [ ] **A structured interview should last 45-60 minutes**
- [ ] **Stick to the script as much as you can**
- [ ] **If you veer off script, that's OK — you sometimes need to probe. Just be ready to get back to it**
- [ ] **Create a scoring system that you all agree on in advance**
- [ ] **If possible, get multiple people to score**
- [ ] **If doing it virtually, use an AI tool like Metaview too — but keep your own scoring system as well**

TEMPLATE

Structured Interview Template

- How have you been since we last spoke?
- How have things been going at work?
- How has your job search gone so far?

Competency — basic (10-15 minutes): define the skills you want to test in advance, and probe how skilled the candidate is in each area.

- Tell me about a time you... (insert a related challenge here)
- Tell me more about your experience with (insert skill here)
- What do you think about... (insert a recent industry development here)

Competence — advanced (10-15 minutes): pick the single most important skill and probe further with specific challenges and scenarios relevant to the role.

- How did you overcome (insert a specific challenge, e.g. having limited budget)?
- How would you deal with (insert a specific scenario, e.g. a PPC account that is losing volume)?

Values (10-15 minutes): we're always looking for candidates who align with our values — there are more questions on this later in the booklet.

- Tell me about a difficult colleague you once worked with.
- Tell me about a time you had to deliver bad news at work.
- Describe a work environment that makes you thrive.

Round-up questions close out the structured interview.

- Is there anything you'd like to add that we haven't covered here today?
- Do you feel that you're sufficiently briefed on the day-to-day responsibilities and the expectations of the role?

FINAL STAGE

Unstructured Interviews

Unstructured interviews suit a final stage where you're perhaps bringing in a senior stakeholder. Sometimes it's worth holding these away from the office — it gives you a

chance to see the candidate 'out in the wild', which is especially useful if the role is client- or public-facing, and a good read on how they behave with others. You can attach a loose structure and let it become a conversation, but define what you're actually looking for in advance.

Behaviours such as persistence, resilience

Values such as honesty, openness

Outlooks such as optimism, cautiousness

TEMPLATE

Unstructured Interview Template

Chemistry.

- Any holiday plans?
- So where are you from originally?
- How was your weekend?

Behaviours.

- What are you learning outside of work?
- What extra-curricular activity did you do at school that you've carried on?
- How do you deal with difficult people?
- Do you think everyone in your team should agree with each other?

Values.

- If you could build a team, what values would you seek in others?
- What would you do if your best employee handed in their notice?
- If I were to hand you our competitor's marketing plan for the next 12 months, what would you do with it?

Outlook.

- How do you see the next 5 years in our industry unfolding?
- How are you planning on improving yourself over the next 12 months?
- Have you started thinking about retirement?

Alternative questions, for when you want to see a different side of someone.

- What is the most interesting thing about you that isn't on your CV?
- If you could go anywhere in the world, where would you go?
- What do you read?
- How would you sell this job to a five year old?

QUESTION BANK

All the Questions

A full bank to draw on across screening, structured and unstructured stages — general competency and values questions first, then sets built specifically for PPC, SEO, email, social, content, digital PR, graduate and leadership hires.

PPC SEO Email Social Content Digital PR Graduates Leadership

Competency questions.

- What marketing channels have you worked with?
- How do you stay updated with the latest marketing trends?
- Can you describe a successful marketing campaign you've managed?
- How do you measure the effectiveness of a marketing campaign?
- What is your experience with SEO and SEM?

- What is the difference between SEO and SEM?
- How do you start developing an SEO strategy?
- How do you approach content marketing strategy?
- Can you explain your process for conducting market research?
- How have you used social media in your marketing efforts?
- What role does data analysis play in your marketing strategy?
- How do you handle tight deadlines for marketing projects?
- What CRM tools are you familiar with?
- How do you segment your target audience?
- Can you give an example of a marketing failure and what you learned from it?
- How do you collaborate with sales teams?
- What is your experience with email marketing?
- How do you ensure brand consistency across different marketing channels?
- Can you describe a time when you had to manage a limited marketing budget?
- How do you prioritize different marketing tasks?
- What strategies do you use for lead generation?
- How do you stay creative in your marketing efforts?
- How do you approach competitor analysis?
- Can you describe your experience with influencer marketing?
- How do you integrate offline and online marketing efforts?
- What is your experience with marketing automation tools?
- How do you handle negative feedback or criticism about a campaign?
- Can you explain the importance of customer personas in your marketing strategy?

Values: honesty.

- Can you describe a time when you made a mistake at work and how you handled it?

- Have you ever had to admit to a weakness or skill gap in your professional abilities? How did you approach it?
- Tell me about a situation where you had to deliver bad news to a client or colleague. How did you handle the conversation?
- Describe an instance where you disagreed with a decision made by your manager. How did you address it?
- Have you ever faced a situation where you were tempted to cut corners or compromise your values? What did you do?

Values: diligence.

- Can you describe a project you worked on where attention to detail was crucial? How did you ensure accuracy?
- Tell me about a time when you identified an error or inconsistency in a complex document or report. What steps did you take to correct it?
- How do you prioritize tasks when you have multiple projects requiring meticulous attention?
- Describe a situation where a small oversight had significant consequences. How did you handle it and what did you learn?
- How do you ensure the quality and accuracy of your work when handling repetitive tasks?

Values: perseverance.

- Can you describe a challenging project or task that took a long time to complete? How did you stay motivated throughout the process?
- Tell me about a time when you faced repeated setbacks on a project. How did you keep going and eventually succeed?
- Describe a situation where you had to overcome significant obstacles to achieve your goals. What strategies did you use?
- Have you ever worked on a task that seemed impossible at first? How did you approach it and what was the outcome?
- Can you give an example of a time when you had to push through a difficult period at work? How did you manage stress and maintain focus?

Values: collaboration.

- Can you describe a time when you worked as part of a team to achieve a common goal? What was your role, and how did you contribute to the team's success?
- Tell me about a situation where you had to work with a colleague who had a different working style than yours. How did you manage the differences to complete the project?
- Describe a time when you had to resolve a conflict within your team. What was the issue, and how did you handle it?
- Can you give an example of a successful project where teamwork was essential? What made the collaboration effective?
- How do you ensure clear communication and alignment when working on a team project? Can you provide an example?

Probing — tell me / scenario questions.

- Describe a time when you had to develop a marketing strategy for a new product launch. What steps did you take and what was the outcome?
- Can you provide an example of a marketing campaign that didn't perform as expected? How did you identify the issues and what changes did you implement?
- Tell me about a time when you had to manage a crisis or negative publicity for a brand. How did you handle the situation?
- Describe a scenario where you had to market a product or service to a very different demographic than usual. What adjustments did you make?
- Can you give an example of how you used data analytics to improve a marketing campaign? What metrics did you focus on and what were the results?
- Tell me about a time when you had to work with a limited budget. How did you prioritize your marketing activities and ensure the best ROI?
- Describe a situation where you had to collaborate with other departments (e.g., sales, product development) to achieve a marketing objective. How did you ensure alignment and success?
- Can you share an experience where you had to pivot your marketing strategy due to unforeseen changes in the market or competitive landscape?

- Tell me about a time when you successfully rebranded a product or service. What were the key steps you took and how did you measure success?
- Describe a situation where you had to use creative thinking to solve a marketing challenge. What was the challenge and what innovative solution did you come up with?

Specifically for PPC.

- Can you walk me through a complex PPC campaign you managed, including the targeting strategy, ad creatives, bidding strategy, and optimization techniques employed?
- How do you approach keyword research for a highly competitive industry or niche? Can you provide an example of a successful keyword strategy you've implemented?
- Describe a situation where you had to troubleshoot a significant drop in conversion rates for a PPC campaign. What steps did you take to diagnose the issue, and how did you address it?
- How do you stay ahead of changes in PPC platforms' algorithms and policies, and how do you adapt your strategies accordingly?
- Can you share your process for A/B testing ad creatives and landing pages? How do you determine which variables to test, and how do you analyze the results to optimize performance?
- Describe a time when you had to manage a large budget across multiple PPC campaigns. How did you allocate the budget effectively to maximize ROI?
- How do you approach remarketing campaigns to re-engage with previous website visitors or customers? Can you provide an example of a successful remarketing strategy you've implemented?
- Can you explain your approach to attribution modeling and how you ensure accurate tracking and reporting of PPC campaign performance?
- Describe a situation where you had to negotiate with vendors or stakeholders to secure favorable terms or resources for your PPC campaigns. How did you approach the negotiation process?
- How do you assess the competitive landscape for PPC advertising in your industry? Can you provide an example of how you've gained a competitive advantage through your PPC strategies?

Specifically for SEO.

- Can you walk me through a comprehensive SEO strategy you developed and implemented for a website? Include key elements such as technical optimization, on-page SEO, off-page SEO, and content strategy.
- How do you approach conducting a thorough SEO audit for a website? What tools and methodologies do you use, and how do you prioritize findings for maximum impact?
- Describe a time when you had to recover a website from a Google penalty. What steps did you take to identify the penalty, and how did you rectify the issues to regain rankings?
- Can you explain your process for conducting keyword research, including how you identify valuable keywords, assess search intent, and prioritize target keywords for optimization?
- How do you approach technical SEO challenges, such as site migrations, crawlability issues, or mobile optimization? Can you provide an example of a complex technical SEO problem you've successfully resolved?
- Describe your approach to link building and off-page SEO. How do you identify high-quality link opportunities, and what strategies do you use to acquire backlinks ethically?
- Can you share your experience with optimizing content for featured snippets and other rich search results? What tactics have you found effective in increasing visibility in SERP features?
- How do you measure the success of an SEO campaign, and what key performance indicators (KPIs) do you focus on? Can you provide examples of how you've achieved significant improvements in organic search traffic and rankings?
- Describe a situation where you had to align SEO efforts with broader marketing or business objectives. How did you ensure synergy between SEO and other marketing channels or departments?
- How do you stay updated with the latest trends and updates in the ever-evolving field of SEO? Can you provide examples of how you've adapted your SEO strategies in response to algorithm updates or industry shifts?

Specifically for email marketers.

- Can you walk me through a highly successful email marketing campaign you've led from conception to execution? Include details on the strategy, segmentation, content, and

results achieved.

- How do you approach building and segmenting an email list for maximum engagement and conversion? What criteria do you use to segment audiences, and how do you personalize content for different segments?
- Describe your process for creating compelling email copy and subject lines that drive opens and clicks. How do you ensure consistency in messaging while maintaining relevance to different segments?
- Can you explain your approach to email deliverability and list hygiene? How do you monitor and maintain email sender reputation, and what tactics do you use to minimize bounce rates and spam complaints?
- How do you leverage data and analytics to optimize email performance? What key metrics do you track, and how do you use insights to refine your email marketing strategy?
- Describe a time when you had to develop an email marketing automation workflow to nurture leads or engage customers throughout their journey. What triggers did you set up, and what were the results?
- Can you share your experience with A/B testing email campaigns? What elements do you typically test, and how do you analyze the results to iterate and improve performance?
- How do you ensure compliance with email marketing regulations, such as CAN-SPAM and GDPR? What measures do you take to obtain and maintain consent from subscribers?
- Describe a situation where you had to react quickly to unexpected changes or challenges in an email marketing campaign. How did you adapt your strategy, and what was the outcome?
- Can you provide examples of innovative email marketing strategies or tactics you've implemented to drive engagement and conversion? How did you measure success beyond traditional metrics like open and click-through rates?

Specifically for social media marketers.

- Can you walk me through a successful social media campaign you've managed, from conceptualization to execution? What platforms did you use, what was the objective, and what were the outcomes?
- How do you approach developing a social media strategy that aligns with overall marketing goals and brand identity? Can you provide an example of a strategy you've implemented

successfully?

- Describe your process for identifying and analyzing key social media metrics. How do you use data to measure the effectiveness of social media campaigns and inform future strategies?
- How do you stay abreast of emerging trends and changes in social media algorithms? Can you share an example of how you adapted your strategy in response to a platform update or trend shift?
- Can you explain your approach to community management on social media platforms? How do you foster engagement, handle customer inquiries or complaints, and build brand advocacy?
- Describe a time when you had to handle a social media crisis or negative publicity. How did you respond, and what steps did you take to mitigate the impact on the brand's reputation?
- How do you leverage user-generated content and influencer partnerships to enhance brand visibility and engagement on social media? Can you provide examples of successful collaborations you've orchestrated?
- Can you share your experience with paid social advertising? How do you determine the most effective ad formats, targeting options, and budget allocation for different campaign objectives?
- Describe your process for creating compelling visual content for social media platforms. How do you ensure consistency in branding and messaging across different channels?
- How do you measure the ROI of social media marketing efforts, especially when it comes to building brand awareness and engagement rather than direct conversions? Can you provide examples of how you've demonstrated the value of social media marketing to stakeholders?

Specifically for content marketers.

- Can you walk me through a content marketing campaign you've led that drove significant results for your organization? What was the objective, and how did you measure success?
- How do you approach developing a content strategy that aligns with your target audience's needs and interests? Can you provide an example of a content strategy you've implemented successfully?

- Describe your process for conducting content research and identifying topics with high potential for engagement and visibility. How do you ensure content relevance and uniqueness in a saturated market?
- How do you leverage different content formats and channels to maximize reach and engagement? Can you share examples of successful multi-channel content distribution strategies you've implemented?
- Can you explain your approach to content promotion and amplification? How do you leverage social media, email marketing, influencer partnerships, and other channels to increase content visibility and drive traffic?
- Describe a time when you had to produce content for a niche or industry you were less familiar with. How did you research and approach the topic to ensure accuracy and relevance?
- How do you measure the impact of content marketing efforts beyond traditional metrics like page views and social shares? Can you provide examples of how you've demonstrated the value of content marketing to stakeholders?
- Describe your process for optimizing content for search engines and improving organic visibility. How do you conduct keyword research, optimize on-page elements, and earn backlinks to drive SEO performance?
- Can you share your experience with repurposing and updating existing content to extend its lifespan and maintain relevance over time? How do you identify opportunities for content refreshment and repackaging?
- How do you ensure consistency in brand voice and messaging across different content pieces and channels? Can you share examples of how you've maintained brand authenticity while adapting content for different audiences and platforms?

Specifically for digital PR candidates.

- Can you walk me through a Digital PR campaign you've led that successfully earned significant media coverage and brand visibility? What strategies did you employ, and what were the outcomes?
- How do you approach building and maintaining relationships with journalists, bloggers, and influencers in your industry? Can you provide examples of successful media outreach initiatives you've executed?

- Describe your process for identifying newsworthy angles and story ideas that resonate with target audiences and media outlets. How do you ensure the relevance and timeliness of your pitches?
- Can you share your experience with crisis management and reputation management in the digital space? How do you handle negative publicity and proactively manage brand perception online?
- How do you measure the effectiveness of Digital PR campaigns and earned media coverage? What key performance indicators (KPIs) do you track, and how do you demonstrate ROI to stakeholders?
- Describe a time when you successfully leveraged data and research to support a Digital PR campaign or pitch. How did you use data insights to strengthen your messaging and storytelling?
- Can you explain your approach to content creation and distribution for Digital PR purposes? How do you create compelling press releases, guest articles, or thought leadership pieces that attract media attention and drive engagement?
- How do you stay updated with industry trends and changes in the media landscape? Can you provide examples of how you've adapted your Digital PR strategies in response to emerging trends or shifts in media consumption habits?
- Describe your process for measuring and improving online brand reputation through Digital PR efforts. How do you monitor brand mentions, sentiment analysis, and online reviews to proactively address reputation issues?
- Can you share examples of how you've successfully integrated Digital PR with other marketing channels, such as SEO, content marketing, and social media, to amplify brand messaging and achieve broader marketing objectives?

Specifically for marketing graduates.

- Can you tell me about a marketing campaign or project you worked on during your studies that you're particularly proud of? What was your role, and what did you learn from the experience?
- How do you stay updated with the latest trends and developments in the field of marketing? Can you share any blogs, podcasts, or industry resources you follow regularly?
- What skills or knowledge do you hope to gain from your first marketing role, and how do you plan to continue your professional development in the field?

- Can you provide an example of a marketing challenge or problem you've encountered in your academic projects? How did you approach solving it, and what were the outcomes?
- Describe a time when you had to work as part of a team on a group project. What was your role, and how did you contribute to the team's success?
- How do you think your academic background has prepared you for a career in marketing? What transferable skills or experiences do you bring to the table?
- Can you share an example of a marketing campaign or brand that you admire and why? What elements of their strategy or messaging resonate with you?
- Describe your experience with digital marketing tools and platforms. Are there any specific areas of digital marketing you're particularly interested in exploring further?
- How do you approach learning from failure or setbacks in your academic projects? Can you provide an example of a time when you faced a challenge and how you overcame it?
- What do you hope to achieve in your first year working in marketing, and how do you plan to measure your success? Are there any specific goals or milestones you've set for yourself?

Specifically for marketing leaders.

- Can you describe your approach to developing and executing a comprehensive marketing strategy for a large organization? What key elements do you prioritize, and how do you ensure alignment with broader business goals?
- How do you stay ahead of emerging trends and changes in the marketing landscape? Can you share examples of how you've successfully adapted your strategies to capitalize on new opportunities or navigate industry shifts?
- Can you provide an example of a marketing campaign or initiative you spearheaded that drove significant business growth or market expansion? What strategies did you employ, and what were the outcomes?
- Describe your experience with building and leading high-performing marketing teams. How do you foster a culture of innovation, collaboration, and accountability within your team?
- Can you share your approach to marketing budget allocation and resource management? How do you prioritize investments across different marketing channels and initiatives to maximize ROI?

- How do you measure the effectiveness of your marketing efforts and demonstrate the value of marketing to executive leadership and stakeholders? What key performance indicators (KPIs) do you track, and how do you use data to drive decision-making?
- Describe a time when you had to lead your organization through a major rebranding or strategic repositioning effort. What were the challenges, and how did you navigate them to achieve buy-in and successful implementation?
- Can you explain your approach to fostering strong relationships with external partners, agencies, and vendors to support marketing initiatives? How do you ensure alignment and collaboration to achieve shared goals?
- How do you approach diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives within your marketing organization? Can you provide examples of how you've championed diversity and inclusivity in your marketing strategies and campaigns?
- What do you see as the biggest challenges and opportunities facing marketers in the current business landscape? How do you plan to address these challenges and capitalize on opportunities in your role as CMO/VP of Marketing?

Example Recruitment — marketing-led headhunters for SaaS and FinTech startups and scaleups in New York and London.
Read the live report and get in touch at theexample.co/reports/interview-workbook