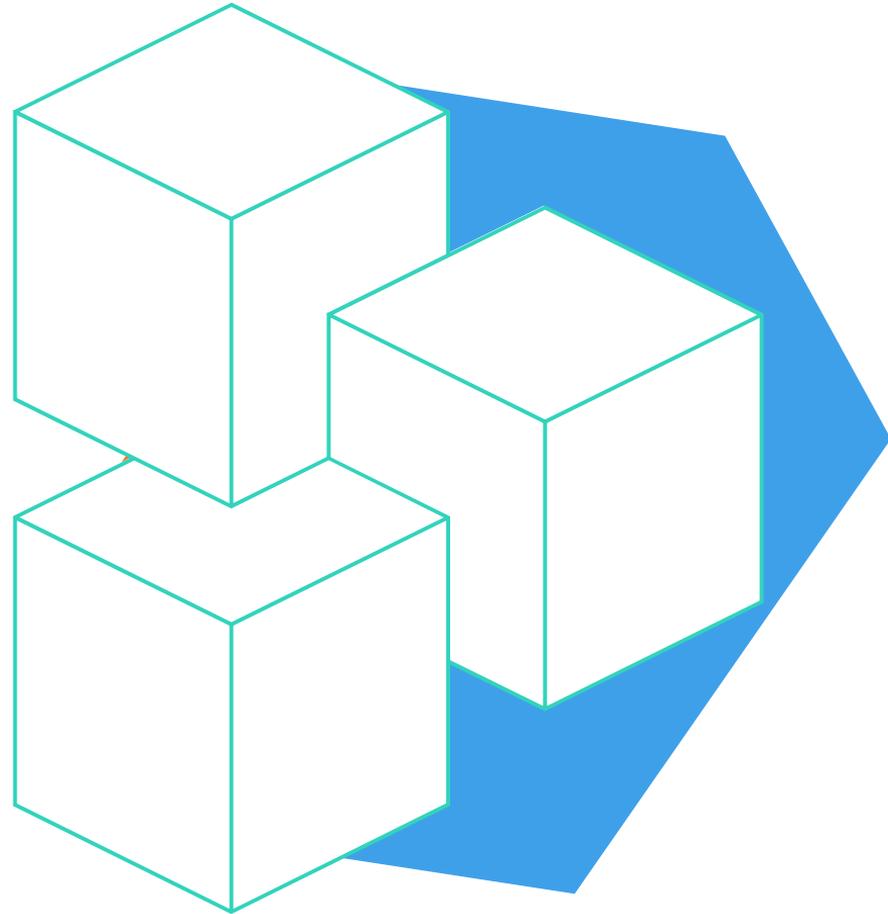


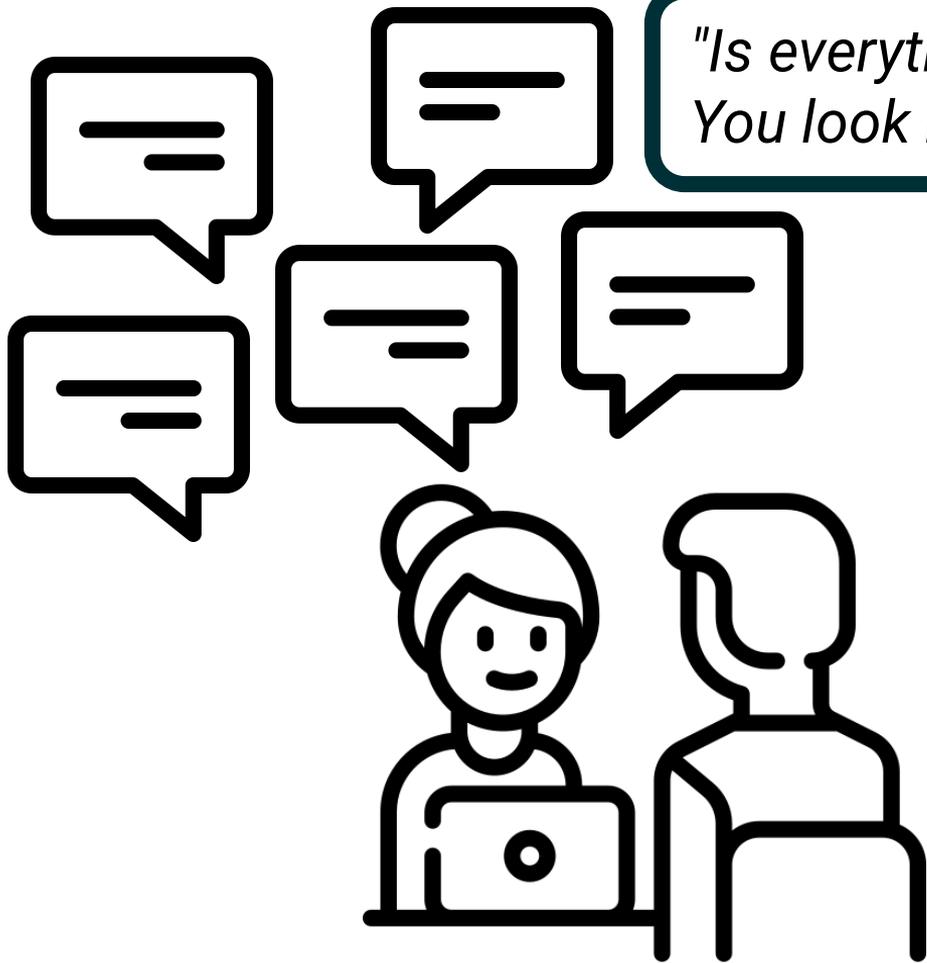
Leveling Up in Job Interviews

 @philipp_hauer

2022 | JUG Saxony Day 2022, 23.09.22



*"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

Mindset and Preparation for Candidates



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

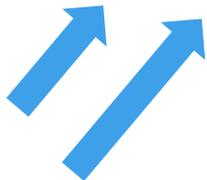
1. **Team Work, Collaboration Skills**
2. **Communication Skills**
3. **Curiosity**
4. Culture Fit, Team Fit, Culture-Add
5. Empathy and Kindness
6. Initiative and Leadership
7. Self-Reflection, Humility
8. Alignment with Company Values
9. Problem-Solving, Analytical Skills



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

Spring Boot

- "What is Spring Boot?"

Microservices

- "When would you use Microservices?"
- "What are the challenges?"

MongoDB

- "When would you use a MongoDB and when RDB/SQL?"

TDD

- "When would you go for the test-driven approach and when not?"



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

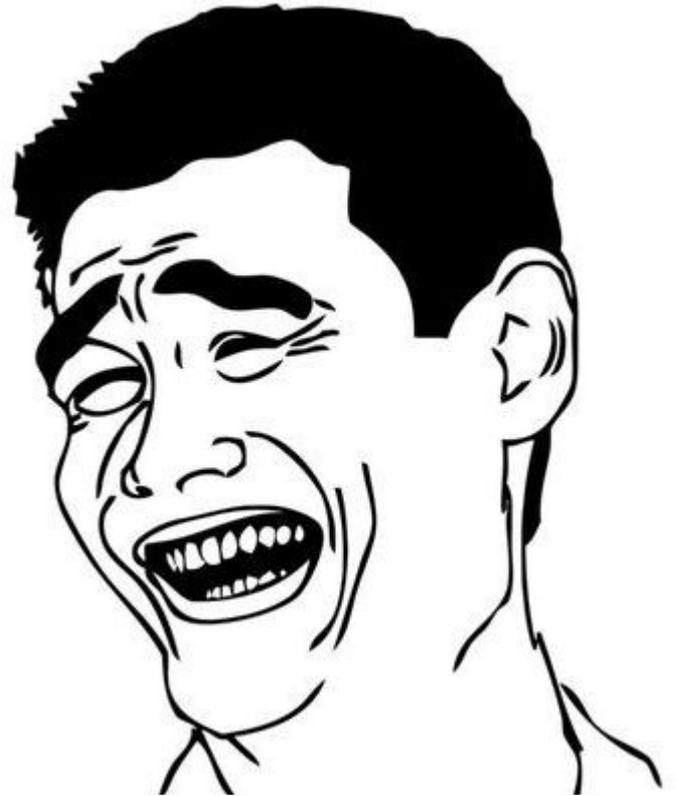
- Take the CV's tech stack with a grain of salt
- Prepare questions to check the candidate's knowledge



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?”

Ask how they would react to hypothetical work-related scenarios.

Experience Questions

“Tell me about a time you...”

Ask about concrete past behavior and examples.



STAR Technique

STAR = Situation/Task - Action - Result

Situation	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?

Compass for navigating during the answer of a question



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



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

- 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**

Observe Behavior

They ask for clarifications

We have a fluent conversation

Candidate's way of speaking is easy to understand

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?"

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

1. Answer concisely

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

2. Offer details



Tips for Candidates

- 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

- 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**

During intro round, say one sentence about you as person.

In my spare time, I

I'm a family guy. I have a son, a wife and a dog - so I don't have any issues with too much spare time :-)

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



Tips for Candidates

- Optional: Leak your personality



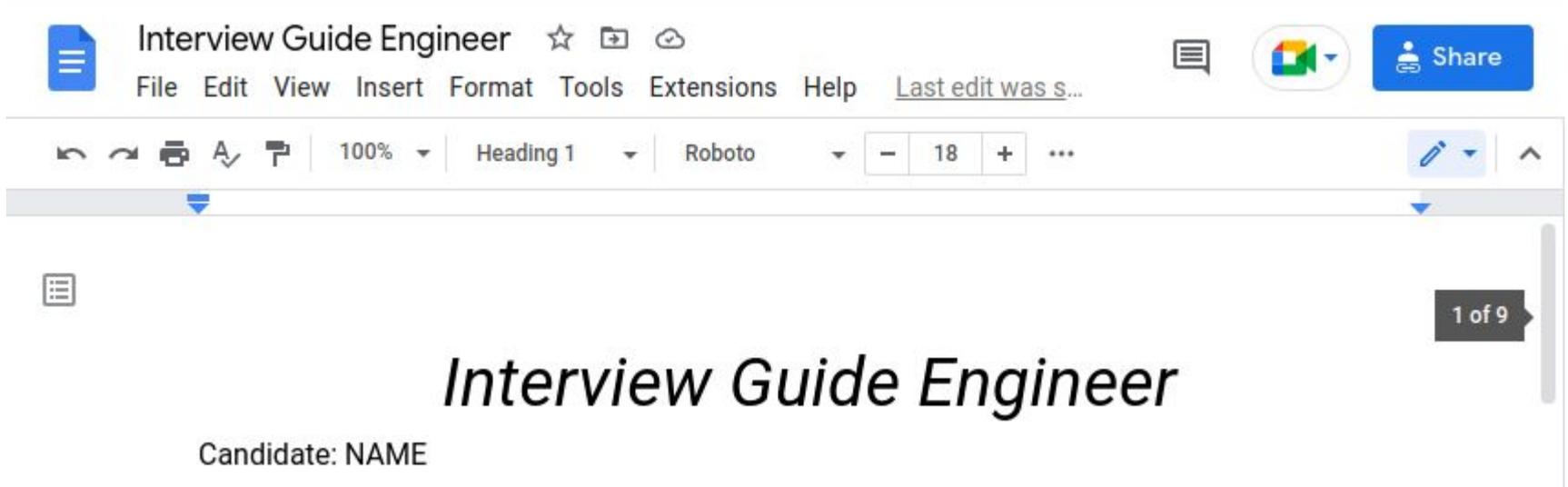
Tips for Interviewers

- 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



Interview Guide

Your Questions

Curiosity

Do you have any questions?
About the role, the company, team, or something?

Interview Guide

Assign every question to a skill/trait
-> Groups

Behavioral Interview (Soft-Skills Questions)

<p>Motivation, Culture Fit, Culture-Add</p> <p>What motivates you at work? What does a great day look like?</p> <p>What are things that drain your energy at work? That you don't like/are demotivating?</p> <p>What does the ideal team look like with whom you would like to work <u>with</u>?</p> <p>What has to happen that you regret your switch to the Spread Group?</p> <p>What was challenging for you in your role as a <u>X</u>?</p> <p>What is important for you at work?</p> <p>Is there anything that you can't do?</p>	
<p>Initiative and Leadership</p> <p>Tell me about a time when you took the initiative/leadership? When did you take the initiative?</p> <p>→ STAR</p>	
<p>Conflict</p> <p>Tell me about a time when you had an argument with a coworker → STAR</p>	

Interview Guide

Select
Questions
based on
CV



Technical Probing (Tech Questions)

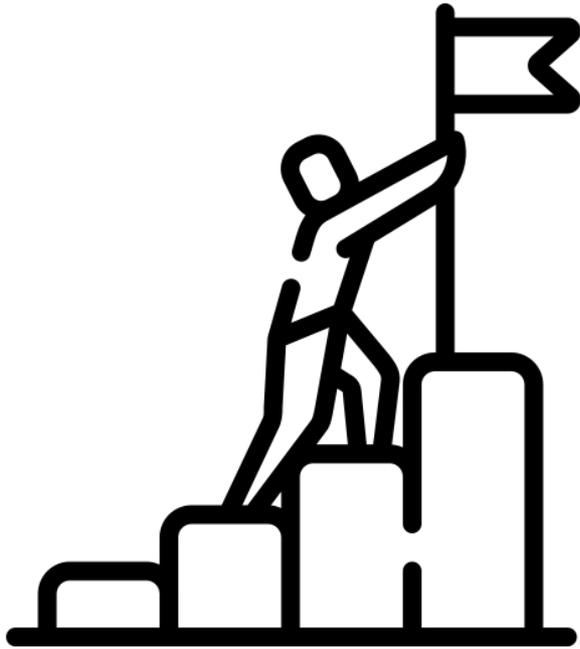
x	What is Spring Boot ? What are the pillars of spring boot? Is Spring Boot a “Microservices Framework”? Do you know alternatives?	
	Microservices/Distributed Systems When would you use MS architecture? Challenges? How do you deal with failure in a distributed system?	
	Java. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do you know new features that have been added to Java recently (e.g. in java 17)?• What do you don't like about Java?	



Mindset and Preparation for Candidates

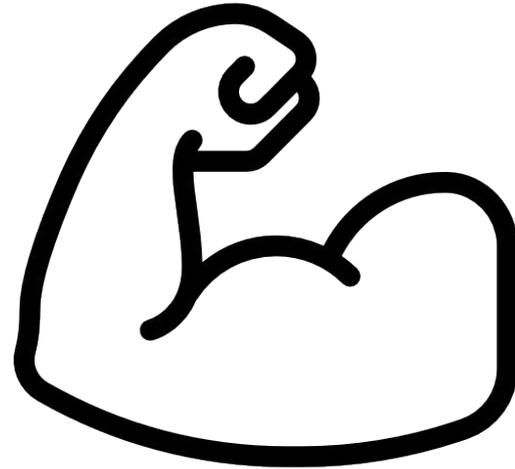
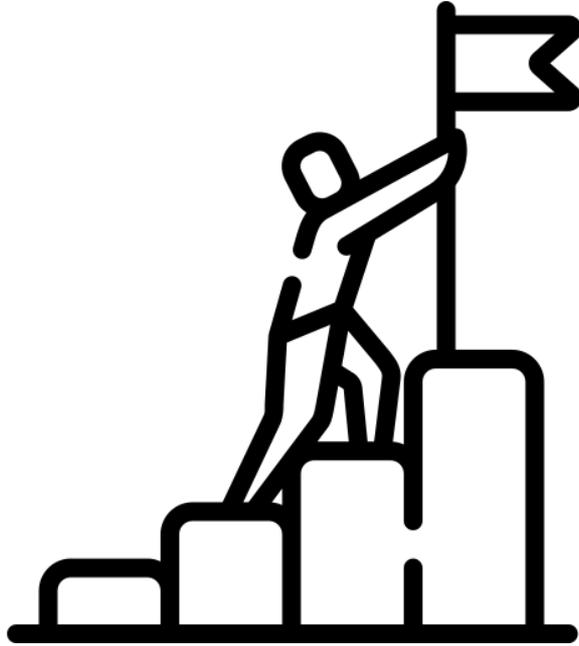


Mindset: Interviews are a **Learning** Opportunity





Mindset: Interviews are a **Practice** Opportunity





Prepare For an Interview

Create a Knowledge Database

- Answer past or googled interview questions
- 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



Summary

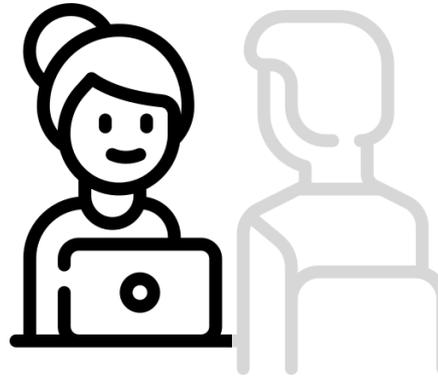
Interviews are a learning opportunity

Have a conversation, clarify, flip

Prepare examples (STAR)

Write down answers to interview questions

Prepare reverse questions



Candidate

Listen carefully

Concise answers;
Offer details on demand

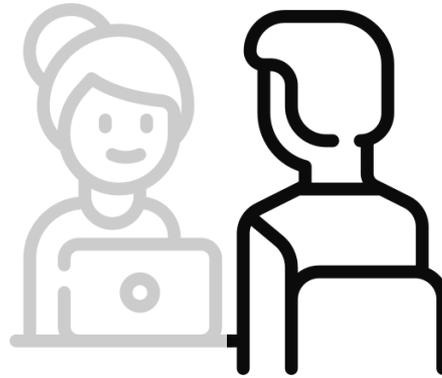
Leak your personality

Practice interviews

Start with the required
skills and traits
Then, assign questions

Check CV's
Tech Stack

Hypothetical or
experience
questions



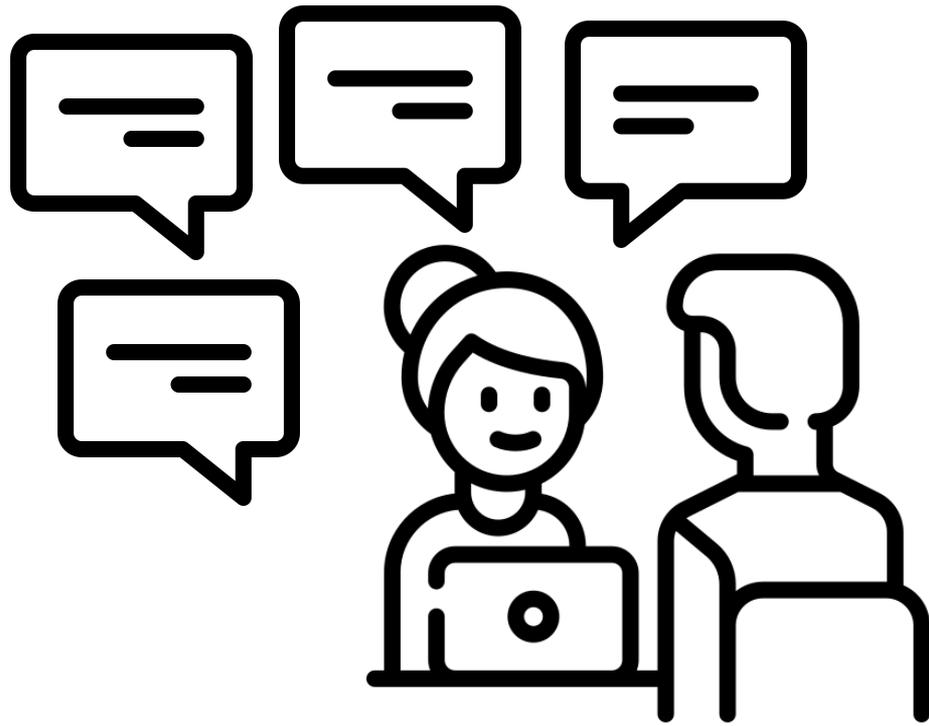
Interviewer

Follow up using STAR

Observe the
candidate, train
observation muscles

Interview Guide

Leak your personality



You always gain. Always.



Thank you!

 @philipp_hauer,
commercetools



Do you have questions?



Removed Slides

Trait Motivation and Culture Fit

Aspect 1) Motivation to switch jobs

Why are you looking for something new?

Trait Motivation and Culture Fit

Aspect 2) General drive at work

What motivates you at work? How does a great day at work look like?

What are things that drain your energy at work? That you don't like/are demotivating?

What has to happen that you regret your switch to [COMPANY]?

ONE TO RULE THEM ALL



CURIOSITY



CODING



WRITING



DRAWING



SPEAKING



FINANCE



LEADERSHIP

Interview Guide

Culture Fit: Traits You May Looking For

Motivation	
Willingness to learn, Fast-Learner	
Collaboration skills	
Good communication	
Empathy and kindness	
A diverse background and viewpoint	
Alignment with both the company's and your values and ethics	
Take initiative and leadership?	
Self-Reflection, Humility, ability to learn	

Interview Guide

Why?

- Be more objective
 - Easier comparison
 - Less preparation time
- One guide
 - per role (Engineer, Engineering Manager)
 - per interview type (screening interview, technical interview)
 - Ideally, you create your own.