



Creative Financial Staffing Client Interviewing Guide

Asking the right questions to get the right candidate



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From the President

At Creative Financial Staffing (CFS), our mission is to offer clients the most comprehensive candidate search: from the preliminary discussion of identifying your needs to counseling both parties in the final offer stage. Whether it is an interim staffing solution, permanent placement, or an executive level need, CFS continues to lead the financial and accounting industry as the premier staffing firm.

Because we cater each of our services to meet the specific needs of our clients, we have developed a guide of interviewing tips for those who choose to take a more active role in the hiring process. Since 1994, we have helped our clients get the most out of the interviewing and hiring process. After all, it is our business! In this brochure, you'll find some of the methods we use at Creative Financial Staffing to determine which candidates represent our core beliefs, values, and standards.

In addition to this brochure, please ask your local CFS representative for a copy of our CFS Local and National Salary Guide. This guide, unlike others, provides you comprehensive salaries for all levels of finance and accounting positions.

We appreciate your commitment to identifying the best and most qualified professionals for your finance and accounting departments. It is our mission to sustain that commitment and further support your finance and accounting needs.



Daniel J. Casey
President, Creative Financial Staffing

Most Common Hiring Criteria

The following characteristics are commonly used to evaluate potential employees:

- Leadership
- Self Motivation/Initiative
- Instrument of Change
- Sets an Example/Enhances Other's Performance
- Goal Oriented For Self and Team
- Technical Skills/Analytical Skills
- Team Player
- Decision-Making Skills
- Independence
- Problem-Solving Skills
- Confidence
- Business Acumen
- Integrity
- Conflict Resolution
- Discipline
- Proactive vs. Reactive
- Project Management Skills
- Organizational Skills
- Prioritizing
- Communication - Oral and Written
- Takes Direction
- Willingness to Learn



Frequently Asked Interview Questions

1. Why did you join/leave your current and previous employers?
2. Describe your current position in detail.
3. Describe what you have done on your major projects/audits.
4. Describe your favorite/least favorite supervisor.
5. What type of position would interest you?
6. What are your strengths and weaknesses?
7. Why are you interested in this company/opportunity?
8. What are your major accomplishments?
9. What are your long-term professional goals?
10. How have you been evaluated by your superiors, peers, subordinates, and clients?
11. Describe your favorite/least favorite work assignment.
12. Describe a difficult situation you faced and how you overcame it.
13. What do you know about our company?
14. Why are you looking to change positions?
15. What do you like most and least about your current position/supervisor?
16. Where do you see yourself in five years?
17. What are the best and worst things your boss would say about you?
18. Name five adjectives that would best describe you.
19. What are your concerns in your current situation and what would you improve?
20. How have you changed or improved the nature of your job?
21. What can you do for us that someone else can't?
22. Why did you choose this particular vocation?
23. What contributions to profits have you made in your present or former positions?
24. What do you think determines a person's progress in a company?

Behavior Based Interview Questions:

If You're Looking For Behaviors That Revolve Around...

Leadership:

1. Tell me about a significant accomplishment that would not have occurred had you not been an employee at the time.
2. Tell me about a time when you were able to step into a situation, take charge, and achieve results.
3. Describe for me a time when you may have been disappointed in your behavior.
4. Tell me about a time when you had to discipline or fire a friend.
5. Tell me about a time when you had to develop leaders under you.

Problem Solving:

1. Tell me about a time when you had to analyze facts quickly, define key issues, and respond immediately or develop a plan that produced positive results.
2. If you had to do that activity over again, how would you do it differently?
3. Describe for me a situation where you may have missed an obvious solution to a problem.
4. Tell me about a time when you anticipated potential problems and developed preventative measures.
5. Tell me about a time when you overcame a major obstacle.

Initiative and Follow-Through:

1. Give me an example of a situation where you had to overcome major obstacles to achieve your objectives.
2. Tell me about a goal you set that has taken a long time to achieve or that you are still pursuing.
3. Tell me about a time when you won (or lost) an important contract.
4. Tell me about a situation that you had significant impact on because of your follow-through.

Communication:

1. Tell me about a time when you had to present a proposal to someone in a position of authority and were successful.
2. Tell me about a situation where you had to be persuasive and sell your idea to someone else.
3. Describe for me a situation where you persuaded team members to do things your way. What was the outcome?
4. Tell me about a time when you were tolerant of an opinion that was different from yours.

Behavior Based Interview Questions Continued:

If You're Looking For Behaviors That Revolve Around...

Ability to Work in Varying Work Conditions (stress, changing deadlines, etc.):

1. Tell me about a time when you worked effectively under pressure.
2. Tell me about a time when you were unable to complete a project on time.
3. Tell me about a time when you had to change work mid-stream because of changing organizational priorities.
4. Describe for me what you do to handle stressful situations.
5. Describe how you manage/prioritize your day in your current or most recent position.

Delegation:

1. Tell me about a time when you delegated a project effectively.
2. Tell me about a time when you did a poor job of delegating.
3. Describe for me a time when you had to delegate to a person with a full workload, and how you went about doing it.

Customer Service:

1. Tell me about a time when you had to deal with an irate customer.
2. Tell me about one or two customer service related programs you have done that you are particularly proud of.
3. Tell me about a time when you made a lasting, positive impression on a customer.

Behavior Based Interview Questions:

If You're Looking For Behaviors That Revolve Around...

Creativity and Innovation:

1. Tell me about a situation in which you were able to find a better way of doing something significant.
2. Tell me about a time when you were creative in solving a problem.
3. Describe a time when you were able to come up with new ideas that were key to the success of some activity or project.
4. Tell me about a time when you had to bring out the creativity in others.

Priority Setting:

1. Tell me about a time when you had to balance competing priorities and did so successfully.
2. Tell me about a time when you had to pick out the most important things in some activity and make sure those got done.
3. Tell me about a time that you prioritized the elements of a complicated project.
4. Tell me about a time when you got bogged down in the details of a project, and how you overcame that.

Working Effectively with Others:

1. Give an example of a time when you were able to maintain productivity with others who have differing points of view.
2. Tell me about a time when you were able to motivate others to get the desired results.
3. Tell me about a difficult situation with a co-worker and how you handled it.
4. Tell me about a time when you played an integral role in getting a team back on track.

Decision Making:

1. Describe for me a time when you had to make an important decision with limited facts.
2. Tell me about a time when you had to make an unpopular decision.
3. Describe for me a time when you had to adapt to a difficult situation. What did you do?
4. Tell me about a time when you made a bad decision.

Questions Employers Should NEVER Ask

Federal and state laws prohibit prospective employers from asking certain questions that are unrelated to the job they are hiring for. Questions should be job-related and not used to find out personal information. You should not be asking about your candidate's race, gender, religious affiliation, marital status, disabilities, ethnic background, country of origin, sexual preferences, or age. Using any of these answers as a basis for hiring would be considered discrimination.

As a guideline, refrain from asking questions regarding any of the following:

- Race
- Sex/Gender
- Sexual Preference
- Religion
- National Origin
- Birthplace
- Age
- Disability
- Marital/Family Status

Legal and Illegal Inquiries

Your interview questions should be designed to determine a candidate's capability to perform the essential functions you have defined for the job. Essentially, you cannot ask questions revealing information that will lead to a bias in hiring. You can only ask questions that relate to job performance.

The table below shows a breakdown of some of the key areas covered by fair hiring laws.

Questions Concerning...	General Guidelines
Age	Do not ask a candidate's age; you may ask about the year of graduation.
Criminal Record	Do not ask if a candidate has been arrested; you may ask if the candidate has ever been convicted of a crime.
Culture/Natural Origin/Race	You may ask if the individual can, "upon hire", provide proof of legal right to work in the United States. You may ask about language fluency if it is relevant to job performance. No race-related questions are legal.
Disability	You may ask if candidates can perform essential job functions, with or without reasonable accommodation; you may ask them to demonstrate how they would perform a job related function.
Marital/Family Status	Questions about marital status and family issues are discouraged.
Religion	You may not ask about religious affiliations. If Saturday or Sunday is a required work day, you may ask candidates if they are available to work on those days.
Sex/Gender	You may ask if a candidate has worked under another name. Be sure to not make gender related assumptions about job capabilities.

Management and Supervisory Skills Questions

The following job interview questions will enable you to assess how well a candidate would perform in a managerial capacity.

1. If I were to interview the people who have reported to you in the past, how would they describe your management style?
2. If I were to interview your reporting staff members, how would they describe your strengths and weaknesses as a manager and supervisor?
3. Give an example of a time when you had an under-performing employee reporting to you from your past work experiences. How did you address the situation? Did the employee's performance improve? If not, what did you do next?
4. Describe the work environment or culture and the management style where you have experienced the most success.
5. Tell me about a time when you had a reporting employee who performed very well. Describe how you handled this situation day-to-day and over time.
6. Describe three components of your philosophy of management that demonstrate what you value and add, as an individual, to an organization's culture and work environment.
7. What factors are crucial within an organization and must be present for you to work most effectively?
8. Tell me about a time when you reorganized a department or significantly changed employee work assignments. How did you approach the task? How did the affected employees respond to your actions?
9. One of the responsibilities of a manager or supervisor is to manage performance and perform periodic performance reviews. Tell me how you have managed employee performance in the past. Describe the process you have used for performance feedback.
10. Describe how you have gone about meeting and developing relationships with your new coworkers, supervisors, and reporting staff upon entering a new workplace.
11. As a manager or supervisor, one of your responsibilities is to provide direction and leadership for a work unit. Describe how you have accomplished this in the past.

Management and Supervisory Skills Answers

The following guidelines are important to keep in mind when evaluating a candidate's responses during a management and supervisory skills interview.

Pay attention to how your candidate answers your questions. You may want to consider the following:

- Does he or she appear comfortable responding to your questions? If not, the candidate may not be experienced as a manager and may be misrepresenting his or her credentials.
- You are looking for answers that reflect the values and approaches that are acceptable and promoted within your workplace culture.
- You are looking for truthful, genuine answers that accurately describe a management style and approach that will “fit” within your environment.
- Beware of a candidate who persistently says the “right thing” but fails to back up statements with solid examples to demonstrate the requested value or approach in action.
- You are looking for demonstrable experience, congruence with your culture, and a solid grasp of management responsibilities and requirements.



Motivation Based Interview Questions

You will discover what key attributes must be present in the work environment for your candidate to be motivated with these job interview questions.

1. Describe the work environment or culture in which you are most productive and fulfilled.
2. Describe the behaviors or work environment that would hinder your productivity and motivation.
3. Imagine you have received a coveted national award five years from now. Why did you receive the award, what is the award, and what are the circumstances under which you are receiving the award?
4. What goals, personal and professional, have you set for yourself?
5. Describe a personal or professional goal that you have previously set and attained?
6. How would you define “success” for your career? At the end of your work life, what must be present for you to feel that you have had a successful career?
7. Describe a work situation in which you can demonstrate that you have motivated someone.
8. How would you motivate a colleague who wasn’t contributing to a team project?
9. Can you give me some examples of things you’ve done in the past year to improve yourself professionally?
10. Do you consider yourself a “self-starter”? Give me an example where you displayed this quality.

Candidate Evaluation Form

This form enables you to assess the candidate's qualifications as well as guide the direction of the interview.

Position: _____ Interview Date: _____ / _____ / _____

Candidate Name: _____ Interviewer Name: _____

Based on the interview, please evaluate your candidate's qualifications for the position listed above. In each section, space is provided to write additional job specific comments.

Education/Training:

The candidate has the necessary education and/or training required for the position.

- ☐ Exceeds requirements
- ☐ Meets requirements
- ☐ Needs a little more training
- ☐ Doesn't meet requirements

Comments: _____

Work Experience:

The candidate has prior work experience that is related to the position.

- ☐ Extensive experience
- ☐ Meets requirements
- ☐ Not related but transferable skills
- ☐ No prior experience

Comments: _____

Candidate Evaluation Form



Technical Skills:

The candidate demonstrated to your satisfaction that he/she had the necessary technical skills to perform the job successfully.

- ☐ Exceeds requirements
- ☐ Meets requirements
- ☐ Needs a little more training
- ☐ Doesn't meet requirements

Comments: _____

Supervising Others:

The candidate demonstrated to your satisfaction that he/she had the necessary experience in supervising others to perform the job successfully.

- ☐ Exceeds requirements
- ☐ Meets requirements
- ☐ Needs a little more training
- ☐ Doesn't meet requirements

Comments: _____

Leadership Skills:

The candidate demonstrated to your satisfaction that he/she had the necessary leadership skills to perform the job successfully.

- ☐ Exceeds requirements
- ☐ Meets requirements
- ☐ Needs a little more training
- ☐ Doesn't meet requirements

Comments: _____

Candidate Evaluation Form



Interpersonal Skills:

Communication: articulated ideas clearly both written and orally.

- ☐ Exceeds requirements
- ☐ Meets requirements
- ☐ Needs a little more training
- ☐ Doesn't meet requirements

Comments: _____

Teamwork:

Demonstrated the ability to work well in a team and with superiors, peers, and reporting staff.

- ☐ Exceeds requirements
- ☐ Meets requirements
- ☐ Needs a little more training
- ☐ Doesn't meet requirements

Comments: _____

Time Management:

Demonstrated the ability to manage time independently and work efficiently.

- ☐ Exceeds requirements
- ☐ Meets requirements
- ☐ Needs a little more training
- ☐ Doesn't meet requirements

Comments: _____

Candidate Evaluation Form



Customer Service:

Demonstrated the ability to be customer focused.

- ☐ Exceeds requirements
- ☐ Meets requirements
- ☐ Needs a little more training
- ☐ Doesn't meet requirements

Comments: _____

Motivation for the Job:

The candidate expressed interest and excitement about the job.

- ☐ Exceeds requirements
- ☐ Meets requirements
- ☐ Needs a little more training
- ☐ Doesn't meet requirements

Comments: _____

Problem Solving:

Demonstrated the ability to design innovative solutions and solve problems.

- ☐ Exceeds requirements
- ☐ Meets requirements
- ☐ Needs a little more training
- ☐ Doesn't meet requirements

Comments: _____

Candidate Evaluation Form



Skill Needed _____:

Demonstrated the ability to: _____

- ☐ Exceeds requirements
- ☐ Meets requirements
- ☐ Needs a little more training
- ☐ Doesn't meet requirements

Comments: _____

Skill Needed _____:

Demonstrated the ability to: _____

- ☐ Exceeds requirements
- ☐ Meets requirements
- ☐ Needs a little more training
- ☐ Doesn't meet requirements

Comments: _____

Skill Needed _____:

Demonstrated the ability to: _____

- ☐ Exceeds requirements
- ☐ Meets requirements
- ☐ Needs a little more training
- ☐ Doesn't meet requirements

Comments: _____

Candidate Evaluation Form



Overall Recommendation:

- ☐ Exceeds requirements
- ☐ Meets requirements
- ☐ Needs a little more training
- ☐ Doesn't meet requirements

Comments: _____

After the Interview

Once you have decided on your candidate and feel secure that they are the best fit for the role, your CFS recruiter will help you determine whether or not you would like to move forward with an offer. We then share your feedback with the candidate and discuss the opportunity that awaits them at your firm. If both parties are in agreement that this is the best possible fit, we extend the offer. One of the benefits of working with a CFS recruiter is that you have the peace of mind knowing your candidate has passed our rigorous screening process, which includes but not limited to the following:

- Evaluation of Work History
- Personal Interviews
- Reference Checks

At Creative Financial Staffing, all of our recruiters attend extensive training seminars on the latest staffing industry news, accounting and finance trends, and recruiting best practices. When you talk to your CFS recruiter, you are talking to our best. We are trained to ensure both you and your candidate have a positive experience during the recruitment and placement process. We pride ourselves on our loyal clients who repeatedly look to CFS to meet their accounting and finance staffing needs.

Extending the Offer

In every job placement, our recruiters are non-partisan moderators, allowing both you and your candidate to navigate the interview without jeopardizing each party's ultimate goal: finding the right fit. To help ensure a successful placement, we ask our clients to allow us to serve as the salary negotiator on their behalf. Part of our job as your recruiter is to know the market rate for each position and what offer will give a candidate the impression they are valued. Our ultimate goal is to prevent future movement while also guaranteeing you, our client, the best talent for the position.



Talking Numbers

The [CFS Salary Guide](#) is the result of extensive research conducted by our staff of consultants. This guide includes data that is tailored to your specific local market along with national averages. These figures are the result of placements made throughout all CFS offices and job orders we've received from clients. Salary data is listed for the low, middle, and high end of salaries for companies of different sizes. Also included are the [Local Market Multipliers](#) and a [Glossary](#) of popular accounting and finance positions.

This resource was designed to help our clients stay up-to-date with the most current salary trends in the accounting and finance industry. For your free copy of the [CFS Salary Guide](#), please contact your local CFS representative.

About CFS

Creative Financial Staffing (CFS) is the nation's largest privately-held accounting and finance specialty placement firm. Since our founding in 1994, CFS has established numerous offices in the United States and the Caribbean. We provide qualified accounting and finance professionals on a temporary and permanent basis across a broad range of industries. The greatest single added advantage that we have is our unique association with professional accounting firms. This gives CFS a distinct edge: [We are connected](#). Our strong positioning within the industry enables us to keep informed of the skills and capabilities necessary to handle the challenges our clients face every day. Through finance and accounting networking, CFS has built an exceptional pool of candidates to help solve your staffing needs fast.

Simply stated, [we have more to offer](#).

Disclaimer:

The information in this brochure was gathered from a variety of resources, both print and online. The information provided, while authoritative, is not guaranteed for accuracy and legality. This information is for guidance, ideas, and assistance only. CFS is not rendering legal advice. If you have questions of this nature, you should seek legal counsel.



Office Locations

CALIFORNIA

Bakersfield
Los Angeles
San Francisco

COLORADO

Denver

CONNECTICUT

Hartford
Shelton

FLORIDA

Ft. Lauderdale
Orlando
Tampa

GEORGIA

Atlanta

ILLINOIS

Chicago
Oak Brook
Northbrook

INDIANA

Fort Wayne
Indianapolis
South Bend

MARYLAND

Baltimore
Bethesda

MASSACHUSETTS

Boston

MICHIGAN

Grand Rapids

MINNESOTA

Minneapolis

NEW YORK

New York

OHIO

Canton
Columbus
Dayton

OREGON

Portland

PENNSYLVANIA

Pittsburgh

TENNESSEE

Nashville

TEXAS

Houston
San Antonio

VIRGINIA

Tyson's Corner

WASHINGTON

Seattle

WISCONSIN

Madison

PUERTO RICO

San Juan