

Discovery Interview Question Sets

Six sets for the first 30 days. Ask the same set of the same kind of person so you can compare answers. Ask; do not fix.

Question set	#	Question	What you are listening for
STANDARD Use with anyone you meet in the first weeks.			
Standard	1	What is working well here that I should protect?	Pride, routines and people you must not disturb.
Standard	2	What are the three things that make your job harder than it needs to be?	Repeated friction. Count how often the same thing comes up.
Standard	3	If you were in my seat, what would you do in the first 30 days?	Their priorities, and what they fear you will get wrong.
Standard	4	What have we tried before that did not stick, and why?	History and scar tissue. Avoid repeating a known failure.
Standard	5	Who else should I talk to that I might not think of?	Informal influencers and quiet experts.
Standard	6	How would you like me to work with you?	Expectations about contact, style and decisions.
SPONSOR The person who asked for the role to exist.			
Sponsor	1	What does a good 90 days look like to you, in specific outcomes?	Whether the sponsor's outcomes are measurable or only a feeling.
Sponsor	2	Which numbers do you look at each week, and how far do you trust them?	Which data your sponsor believes, and which they discount.
Sponsor	3	Where do you want me to move fast, and where carefully?	Risk appetite and sensitive areas.
Sponsor	4	Which decisions can I make without asking you?	Your real authority, in plain terms.
Sponsor	5	What would make you lose confidence in me by day 60?	Their warning signs. Write them on your ledger.
PEER Other managers whose work touches yours.			
Peer	1	What does my area do that makes your work harder?	Handover friction you can fix quickly.
Peer	2	What do you need from my area that you do not get today?	Unmet requests. Often a quick win.
Peer	3	How do you hear about problems in my area: early, late or not at all?	Whether information flows or is held back.
Peer	4	What is one thing we could stop doing between us?	Duplicated reports, meetings or approvals.
Peer	5	How do you prefer to raise a concern with me?	The channel and tone that will actually reach you.
DIRECT REPORT People who report to you, one to one.			
Direct report	1	What should I know about your site or team that is not on any report?	The unwritten picture.
Direct report	2	What are you proudest of, and what keeps you up at night?	Strengths to back, risks to take seriously.
Direct report	3	Where do you feel unsupported, and by whom?	Gaps in support, including from you.
Direct report	4	What gets in the way of the standard you want to hold?	Constraints you can remove: kit, people, process, authority.
Direct report	5	What would you like me to leave alone, and what would you like me to change?	Where to hold back and where to act.
FRONTLINE Three to five people on the floor, ideally on a back shift. Ask on the floor, not in an office.			
Frontline	1	Talk me through your last shift. What went wrong, and what happened next?	How problems really get handled.
Frontline	2	What do you do that is not in the procedure, and why?	Workarounds. Each one is a signal about the process.
Frontline	3	What slows you down every day that someone could fix?	Small, repeated delays.
Frontline	4	When you raise a problem, what happens?	Whether people trust the escalation route.
Frontline	5	What would you change tomorrow if it were up to you?	Ideas that cost little and matter to the crew.
CROSS-FUNCTION HR, finance, engineering, IT, quality, planning.			
Cross-function	1	What data do you hold about my area that I may not have seen?	Attrition, variance, fault and audit data.
Cross-function	2	What do you ask my area for that arrives late or wrong?	Where your area is a bottleneck for others.

Cross-function	3	Which decisions in my area land on your desk later as a problem?	Upstream causes of downstream cost.
Cross-function	4	What would a good working rhythm between us look like?	A cadence you can agree in the meeting.
Cross-function	5	What is the one number you wish my area got right?	Quick credibility. Fix it first.

How to run an interview

- Allow 30 to 45 minutes. Say at the start that you are listening, not deciding.
- Take notes on paper. Within the hour, enter the date, person, role, top three things heard and your hunch in Days 1-30.
- Do not promise action in the room. Agree one follow-up and put it in the Follow-up column.
- Aim for 25 to 35 interviews across direct reports, peers, your sponsor, other functions and three to five frontline people.

Stakeholder Trust Ledger

The most important database in this pack. 5 minutes every Friday. Trust is the medium of authority.

Fictional example: names, sites and figures are invented for illustration.

Rule: ≥3 stakeholders at signal-4+ by day 30. <3 at signal-4+ by day 60 = plan at risk.

Stakeholder	Touchpoints this week	Signal strength (1-5)	Trend	What I owe them	What I'm owed	Follow-up cadence
Helen Whitfield	Weekly 1:1 + 2 ad-hoc data shares	4	↑ from 3	The 90-day plan w/c 2026-07-13	Decision on Bramley scope	Weekly Wed 09:00
Tom Bardsley (Bramley)	Site visit + drink after	4	↑ from 2	Driver retention plan visible to him	Honesty about Bramley's people	Site visit fortnightly
Mira Okafor (CI)	Co-walked Ridgemont + slotting kick-off	5	↑ from 4	Air cover for slotting standardisation	Co-ownership of QW2	Weekly Thu 14:00
Site Director — Harrowgate Park	1:1 cancelled twice this week by them	2	↓ from 3	A reason to engage — find the win that's theirs	Engagement	1:1 Mon — re-establish
Site Director — Ridgemont	Joint depot tour, signed off slotting	4	↑ from 3	Mira's time on slotting	Permission to lead on standardisation	Fortnightly
Site Director — Northway	High-trust from day 1 (Northway runs well)	5	=	Recognition + protected time for her best practice	Best-practice export	Monthly
Site Director — Bramley	1:1 went well, awaiting next	3	↑ from 2	Bramley driver retention follow-through	Honest read of his pipeline	Weekly
HRBP	Joint working group on retention	4	↑ from 3	Quick-win 1 sponsor cover	Recruitment data	Fortnightly
Finance BP	Attended monthly close	3	↑ from 2	Accurate variance commentary	OPEX visibility	Monthly close
PMO Lead	RAID cadence reset together	4	↑ from 2	Continued discipline	Programme-level visibility	Weekly

ROLLUP — Trust signal heatmap

Signal 5 (Champion)	2
Signal 4 (Ally)	5
Signal 3 (Neutral)	2
Signal 2 (Cautious)	1
Signal 1 (Adversarial)	0

Stakeholders at signal-4 or above	7
Average signal strength	3.8
Stakeholders at signal-2 or below (inte	1

Signal strength rubric

5 — Champion	Will fight for me when I'm not in the room.
4 — Ally	Engaged, honest, picks up the phone.
3 — Neutral	Polite, transactional, no pattern yet.
2 — Cautious	Hedging. Watching. Slow to commit.
1 — Adversarial	Actively working around me. Confront within 2 weeks or escalate.