

OPINION

## Killer job interview questions as a tiebreaker

**I'm the vice-president for operations of a major company now looking to hire a department manager. After a series of interviews and tests, we've identified two candidates in our shortlist. Their similarities and differences are almost equal. To break the tie, we plan to do one final interview for each. Now, we're thinking of the best possible questions to ask before we meet them. Can you help us? — Two Rivers**

I've already written no less than ten articles on this subject since 1993 when I started writing in this space. But of course, that was more than 30 years ago. If we're limiting ourselves to job interviews as a tiebreaker, then that will be a breeze, except that I'd like to disabuse your mind that it's not the only thing that matters when deciding to hire a manager. There are a lot more. And I've already covered them in the past.

After conducting thousands of job interviews to identify the best candidates, I learned that there have been no major changes in the way we ask questions to job applicants. So much has been written in the past and many of them can be searched, complete with all the killer answers to all difficult questions out there.

You may agree or disagree with those questions. Some of them may not be important for you and your organization. Some may work for you but not for other recruiters. Just the same, the final judgment on what the important interview questions are will be yours alone. If you decide to adopt those questions, it would take some time before you realize that you've become successful in the recruitment process.

### TEN KILLER QUESTIONS

The world we live in is not based on logic and justice, no matter how we aspire for it. As a consequence, our world is not as good as it could be. We talk about things based on our direct experience, whether good or bad. Let's start by asking one simple question: how do you stay on the positive side of the street?

Unfortunately, the answer to that question is not simple. There are thousands of inspiring articles and books about career development and success, all trying to dissect all workplace issues that have become important to people and organizations. And for that matter, I consulted the past presidents of People Management Association of the Philippines (PMAP). I believe their insights, tactics and strategies on people management should help us understand the importance of a job interview.

The following questions are easy to understand and it's up to you to copy them all or adjust according to your taste. They may not always work. But they will be the closest you can get to the "magic wand" of our respondents.

**1. Ernesto Espinosa, 2002 PMAP president:** "If the person who hurt you the most showed up at your door, what will you do or

tell him/her?" This is a question of testing the candidate's maturity, humility, sense of pride, forgiveness and respect for others.

**2. Ellen Fullido, 2022 PMAP president:** "What was the most selfless thing that you did as a manager for your organization that has gone through a crisis situation?" The key word is "selfless." In this materialistic world, how does one distinguish himself from the rest?

**3. Edgardo Soriano, 1995 PMAP president:** "In settling a crisis situation that needs a win-win result, what are your non-negotiables?" The question is focused on defining the result most acceptable to all parties without undermining one's personal values.

**4. Ramon Segismundo, 2017 PMAP president:** "Are you willing to try out the job for one day? After that, we'll decide if you're the right person for the job." This is a modified version of an assessment center often used as a trade test. The logic is easy to understand. On-the-job performance (even if for just one day) is the key determinant.

**5. Rene Gener, 2000 PMAP president:** "What will be the biggest game-changer that you will bring to the business? One that I have not heard or seen before? Why?" This question tries to determine the creativity and innovativeness of the applicant.

**6. Barbie Atienza, 1998 PMAP president:** "Aside from financial issues, what are the top three factors that you'll consider when cutting expenses and manpower?" This question focuses on one's values amid the realities of corporate survival.

**7. Gerry Plana, 2019 PMAP president:** "Cite a grave failure or serious mistake that happened in the past that made you a better person and professional today." The question is about how you treated your mistake as an unforgettable burden or a stepping stone for success.

**8. Chit Ventura, 1993 PMAP president:** "What's the legacy you want to leave behind and what steps are you taking to achieve that?" It's not about material things, but the enduring character and faith of a person.

**9. Jun Mendoza, retired Senior Vice-President of CTBC Bank Philippines:** "If you're the CEO, should you fire an HR department head because he played favorites by not firing an employee who should be fired?"

**10. Erick Reyes, retired HR head of Roxas Holdings:** "Tell me your biggest failure so far and how did you recover from it?"

I asked ten PMAP presidents to contribute to this article, but didn't receive the reply of two other respondents in time to meet the deadline. Fortunately, my good friends who have HR experience took the last two slots.

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# Private sector involvement needed to ensure tech-voc graduates are job-ready

PROPOSED changes to the K-12 law include the need for increased private sector involvement in the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) to help make technical and vocational (tech-voc) course graduates job-ready, a congressman said.

"[TESDA] only has four industry boards now, I don't think that's enough," Pasig City Rep. Roman T. Romulo, who heads the House basic education and culture panel, told *BusinessWorld* in a phone interview.

TESDA in August established industry boards in partnership with various private sector representatives to assess whether a student's tech-voc skills will be enough to meet these sectors' demands.

The industry boards include the Philippine Constructors Association, Inc. for the construction sector, the Tourism Industry Board Foundation, Inc. for the tourism sector, the IT & Business Process Association of the Philippines for the information and communications technology sector, and the Philippine Cacao Industry Association for the cacao sub-sector under agriculture.

TESDA also formed an industry board with the Semiconductor and Electronics Industries in the Philippines Foundation, Inc. to represent the manufacturing, semiconductor, and electronics sub-sector.

"The first step that [TESDA] should do is to form more industry boards," Mr. Romulo said in Filipino. "The one who dictates what skills [a learner] needs is the industry."

Under the proposed Education Pathways Act, a student who finishes Grade 10 can either proceed to senior high school to pursue a college degree or take a tech-voc course. The measure hurdled the House basic education and culture panel last month.



TESDA

"If a learner, after completion of Grade 10, wishes to take the tech-voc track ... we will have an upgraded TESDA that will take care of the curriculum together with industry partners," Mr. Romulo told the committee on Oct. 18.

The measure "not only offers choice but also the promise of a more inclusive, flexible, and dynamic educational system that empowers every student, regardless of their background or circumstances," Federation of Free Workers President Jose Sonny G. Matula said in a Viber message.

The unnumbered substitute bill also requires TESDA to facilitate on-the-job training and apprenticeship programs to be offered by industry stakeholders.

A student may also opt for the ladderized education program, where those who have completed a TESDA course and are already working are eligible to enroll in a college or university degree program.

Mr. Matula added that the bill should include courses in labor rights for both senior high and tech-voc stu-

dents for improved awareness among workers.

Under the current law, Republic Act No. 10533 or the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013, it takes two more years of basic education — Grades 11 and 12 — before a student can earn a high school diploma. At the time, the Philippines was the only Asian country and one of three in the world with a 10-year basic education program.

TESDA recorded a total of 1.26 million enrollees and 1.23 million graduates last year, according to its 2022 annual report.

Terry L. Ridon, a former youth party-list lawmaker and currently the convener of think tank InfraWatch PH, said the TESDA has yet to be fully developed to handle huge numbers of students taking the tech-voc route.

"The success of this measure is dependent on an all-rounded development of TESDA and its various private partners," Mr. Ridon said in a Viber message. "Unfortunately, the tech-voc sector has not reached this level of development yet." — **Beatriz Marie D. Cruz**

## Wages boost US labor costs; house price inflation picks up

WASHINGTON — US labor costs increased solidly in the third quarter amid strong wage growth while house price inflation accelerated in August, the latest signs that the Federal Reserve could keep interest rates high for some time.

The reports on Tuesday pose a threat to efforts by the US central bank to bring inflation to its 2% target. Fed officials started a two-day policy meeting on Tuesday. The US central bank is expected to leave interest rates unchanged but maintain its hawkish bias at the conclusion of that meeting as a recent spike in US Treasury yields and stock market sell-off have tightened financial conditions.

"Those wage increases are likely to keep inflation running above target while higher house prices could lead to a pick-up in shelter inflation," said Andrew Hollenhorst, chief US economist at Citigroup in New York. "For now the Fed will remain on-hold, but the evident upside risk to inflation means Chair

(Jerome) Powell and committee will keep potential further rate hikes on the table."

The Employment Cost Index (ECI), the broadest measure of labor costs, rose 1.1% last quarter after increasing 1.0% in the April-June period, the Labor department's Bureau of Labor Statistics reported. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast the ECI would rise 1.0%.

Labor costs increased 4.3% on a year-on-year basis, the smallest gain since the fourth quarter of 2021, after advancing by 4.5% in the second quarter. Growth in annual compensation is gradually slowing after peaking at 5.1% last year, in line with some easing in labor market conditions. It, however, remains well above the pre-pandemic pace.

The rise in compensation helps to explain the surge in consumer spending last quarter, which contributed to the fastest economic growth rate in nearly two years. — **Reuters**

### FULL STORY



Read the full story by scanning the QR code or by typing the link [tinyurl.com/32wjrfsx](https://tinyurl.com/32wjrfsx)

## ERRATUM

*BUSINESSWORLD* published on Oct. 27 a story titled "Melco Resorts ordered to reinstate 42 guards," whose online version was immediately taken down due to a factual error. The guards were never terminated by the casino operator. What the appellate court reinstated in its Oct. 18 decision was the labor arbiter's award of P50,000 in nominal damages to each of Melco's 42 in-house security guards. We regret the error.

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