

## Hiring instrument

# The Level 1 interview guide

For staffing cross-functional core team leaders and members. One variable: the freedom level the candidate already operates at. Levels 1 and 2 act and inform; Level 3 recommends and waits; Levels 4 and 5 ask and wait. Ask about the past, not the hypothetical, and score the verbs, not the polish. Treat the vetting as a two-stage funnel: this freedom-level screen first, for every seat at the table; the full attribute profile second, for the leader's (FTTM Managers and Selecting FTTM Managers, on the ideas page). Companion to the article at [lateralworks.com/ideas/the-level-1-hire](https://lateralworks.com/ideas/the-level-1-hire).

### The eight questions

1. Tell me about the last decision you made without asking anyone.
2. Tell me about a time you acted first and informed your boss after. What happened?
3. Tell me about a time you acted on your own and were wrong. What did your boss do, and what did you do next?
4. What did you do the last time you were told to wait?
5. Walk me through a recommendation of yours that was refused. What did you do then?
6. On your last program, how much of your work did you decide versus get assigned?
7. Tell me about a trade-off you made between your function's preference and the product's schedule. Who won, and who did you tell?
8. In team meetings, what did you decide in the room, and what did you take back to your function first?

### The tells: score the verbs

| Levels 1–2                                                                                                                                        | Level 3                                                                                                                       | Levels 4–5                                                                                                   |
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| "I decided..."<br>"I shipped it and told my boss after."<br>"I committed my function in the room."<br>"I was wrong once. Here is what I changed." | "I recommended..."<br>"I escalated it for a decision."<br>"I took it back to my manager."<br>"I was waiting on the approval." | "I was assigned..."<br>"I asked what to do."<br>"My manager went to the meetings."<br>"No one ever told us." |

### The scar test

Ask for the time they moved too fast and were wrong in public, and what it taught them. The lifelong Level 3 has no such story, because a signoff always stood between them and the consequence. No scar, no Level 1.

### The rebel screen

Level 1 is not a rebel: a Level 1 professional acts without permission and never without informing; a rebel skips the informing. In every acting-first story, listen for who they told and when. Then ask: **Tell me about a rule you disagreed with. What did you do?** Challenged it openly or got it changed is a keeper; quietly ignored it is not. And ask where they would never trade speed. No answer means no brakes.

### The reference check

Do not ask former bosses whether the candidate was good. Ask: **How often did they surprise you? Did you check their work? Would they act without you?** "They never surprised me, I reviewed everything" describes a Level 3 relationship, whichever of them caused it. For a core team seat, add one peer in a different function: **would you want them representing their function on your team again?**

### Keep the promise

The interview advertised freedom, so deliver it. Put the new hire's decision areas in a signed empowerment matrix in the first month, and hold the first Level 1 decision that goes wrong as a public learning event. You recruit Level 1 people with money. You keep them with freedom.