



# The Hidden Value of Theme-Based Interviews



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# A Theme-Based Understanding of People

**Imagine a world where your workforce was comprised entirely of your top performers. What would change if every employee had the dedication, talent, and effectiveness of your top ten percent?**

Theme-based interviewing is designed to help you make this vision a reality.

People make decisions based on what they value most. As people live out these values, they show up as life themes, or patterns in the way someone interacts with others and functions in society. Life themes are more than a person's knowledge or skill. They reflect who they are in living out their values. Their dominant attitudes, words, and behaviors clearly display what matters most to them.

These themes appear in the workplace, too. So why not leverage them in your search for the best employees? Using these values can help you find individuals who will reflect the same dedication and talent as your top employees.

**But first, it's important to know the types of life themes that exist...**

# Life Themes in Action

Individuals who possess positive life themes want to excel in everything they do. These individuals quickly become highly productive, influential, and positive members of society. People who consistently live out positive values are rare, and because of this they stand out among the rest.

When a group of people comes together with common positive life themes, their collaboration leads to betterment of others in their organization. Their excellent thoughts and actions multiply when combined with others like them.

Many people have positive life themes at work in their lives, but they lack consistency or might take a safer path when faced with difficult situations or challenges. Over time, this average response becomes a neutral life theme, seeking to maintain things without rocking the boat. Some people even demonstrate counterproductive life themes that are mainly self-serving and can lead to dysfunction and disorganization in a team or society.

## Positive Life Themes

- Others-focused and service-driven
- Builds relationships to bring out the best in people
- Invites input for shared goals and builds ownership
- Views obstacles as opportunities and collaborates on solutions

## Neutral Life Themes

- Likes to be helpful
- Gets along, generally
- Gets things done
- Tries to keep going

## Counter Life Themes

- Self- or process-focused, agenda-driven
- Builds relationships to persuade people
- Informs others of goals to follow
- Views obstacles as barriers

**People who consistently live out positive life themes create a working climate that highlights:**

**1**

**Unconditional & Positive  
Regard for Others**

**2**

**High Relationships &  
High Expectations**

**3**

**Balancing People &  
Process**

# Using Theme-Based Selection in Hiring

**Tapping into these themes can provide new insight into hiring, by focusing your process on the themes your top performers embody.**

In hiring, theme-based selection starts by determining the priorities of your most successful employees through extensive research and client input. Life themes show what an individual values most, displayed through consistent patterns of attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. Once those have been determined, the same standards are applied to candidates so you can find employees who will replicate the impact of your top performers.

Then, the traits of your best employees are broken down into specific attributes. Attributes are the focused ways an individual lives out the themes in daily life. This helps you identify criteria to make the best hiring choices and continue to develop employees after they join your team.

Theme-based selection is a type of structured interviewing. A theme-based approach uses a consistent set of questions across all candidates, using a standardized measure to evaluate interviewees based on their responses. This allows for consistent, unbiased analysis of all candidates, while maintaining a personal touch. While a candidate's skills and knowledge are important, they are assessed at a separate stage in the hiring process.

## Themes and Their Attributes

**Hiring for a specific position with theme-based selection starts by determining the dominant patterns of life themes.**

These themes show what leaders do to connect with and unite their teams, fuel their determination, and find resources to achieve their goals. Through research on many leadership roles, some themes frequently surface, such as:



**Positively Relating**



**Focusing on Mission**



**Mobilizing Others**



**Focusing on Results**



**Multiplying Impact**

These themes are broken down into specific attributes that show a deeper understanding of each theme in the role you're looking to hire. For example:

▶ **Positively Relating**

- Rapport
- Communication
- Empathy

▶ **Focusing on Mission**

- Positive Attitude
- Service to Others
- Core Values

▶ **Mobilizing Others**

- Motivation
- Delegation
- Mentoring

▶ **Focusing on Results**

- Planning
- Decision-Making
- Accountability

▶ **Multiplying Impact**

- Knowledge Building
- Intercultural Connections
- Resource Awareness

Themes and attributes provide a basis for choosing and developing new employees. They find the consistent attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors demonstrated in the personal and professional lives of top performers.

***For example, the relationship of a theme with an attribute would look like this:***

## Theme: Positively Relating

The first priority of an outstanding leader is to build positive and supportive relationships with individuals. This person has multiple strategies to communicate and effectively work through a variety of issues in resourceful ways. This person is highly empathetic to the thoughts and feelings of individuals.

### **Attribute: Communication**

This leader views multiple forms of communication as vital to a successfully functioning team. They are especially committed to one-on-one interaction in a manner that ensures the viewpoints of affected parties are heard. Differences in viewpoints are seen as opportunities to design even more affective approaches to issues. This person knows that authentic dialogue is essential to ensuring progress.

# The Advantages of Theme-Based Selection

Theme-based interviews give you confidence that you are making the best employee choice by selecting candidates who will be successful in your organization. However, that's not the only advantage to developing life themes for specific roles.

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## Consistent Process

This leads to a structured, predictable interview process that gives you confidence. All candidates are treated in a consistent, unbiased way, making comparisons relevant and easy.



## Unified Hiring Team

The life themes, attributes, and questions provide a common language and mindset for hiring managers. Regardless of how they feel on a given day, or who is conducting the interview, the team can all agree on what they're looking for in a top candidate.



## Structured Interview Questions

The questions in theme-based selection are based on real-life situations and provide criteria to consistently analyze multiple candidates. This allows for the hiring decision to be made based on job-related talents, keeping the interview focused and intentional.



## Personal Interviews

The structure or efficiency of an interview should never outweigh the personal feel for everyone involved. With theme-based selection, technology assists in the process, but people do the important work. Interviewers listen to candidates as if they are in the role you need to fill.



## Relationship-Building

Rather than focusing on task-oriented questions, theme-based questions invite applicants to share their views, motivations, and beliefs, allowing you to know the candidate on a deeper level. Because candidates are treated with respect, the process helps convey a welcoming and professional reputation to the public.



## Professional Growth for New Hires

Once a candidate is hired, the insight from the hiring process helps them continue to grow in their role and as a leader in the organization. The strengths and areas for growth found in their interviews can be integrated into future onboarding and development plans.



## Employee Feedback

The value of themes isn't limited to the hiring process or individual candidates. As supervisors gain insight into the life themes and attributes of excellence, they can be used to coach current employees and offer encouragement to internal candidates not selected to a new position.



## Legal Protection

Theme-based, structured interviews not only predict performance better than unstructured interviews, but they are also more legally defensible because all candidates have the same interview experience.

# How Theme-Based Selection Works

Developing a new selection tool requires an up-front investment in research, but it allows us to find and develop top performers at your organization. If an existing interview does not match a client's needs or requires customization, here's how it works:

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## Step 1: Research & Client Input

Interview development starts with your input. After all, you know the talents your top performers possess better than anyone else. Start by describing your top performers in detail, thinking through what motivates them, how they operate, and what their day-to-day work-style looks like.

***This research should focus on four key areas:***

▶ **Positive Relationships**

Outstanding employees build and maintain excellent relationships with their coworkers, clients, and other key individuals. Learn about the nature and extent of those work relationships to start defining themes.

▶ **Personal Mission**

Years of experience and research shows that the best employees also have clearly-defined personal missions. While the specifics of each mission might vary, these employees can identify how their personal mission interacts with the core values of the organization. Learn about these people's core mission, and how it is lived out in the context of the organization.

▶ **Engage for Results**

Once you have a clear idea of what drives an employee, it's important to know how they get things done personally and as part of a team. Whether a person is in a leadership or specialized role, top performers find ways to achieve high goals in a collaborative manner.

▶ **Specialty Areas**

From there, it's time to describe the unique attitudes and talents an employee needs to be a top performer in their specific role. These areas will be diverse based on the role, organization, and industry, but dive deep into the traits that make the best employees stand out.



## Step 2: Theme & Attribute Descriptions

Once the research has been conducted with top performers, the data is combined with key insights and best practices in the specific industry. These help determine the life themes that make someone successful in the role. Then, the descriptions are refined and organized into 12 to 15 basic attributes that break down the day-to-day application of that theme.

The theme and attribute descriptions are carefully reviewed by the hiring team and key leaders to make sure they accurately reflect top performers in this role.

## Step 3: Question Formation

The next step is for analysts to use the research in developing interview questions and designing the criteria for average responses compared to outstanding ones. The goal is to develop questions that will separate the top 10 percent of potential employees from the top 25 percent. These questions are designed so a candidate can express their views on each theme area by responding to everyday situations they might encounter in the role.

## Step 4: Ongoing Monitoring and Refining

After testing and confirming research standards, the interview tool is put into everyday use. User data is collected over time to monitor the results and is compared with client feedback. This information is used to refine the tool as needed.





## Don't make the costly mistake of hiring the wrong person for the job.

**Theme-based interviews give you true insight into who your job candidates are in an unbiased, structured way. This knowledge gives you the ability to hire the people who think and act like your top performers.**

But the advantages of theme-based selection go beyond the interview. It provides you with valuable feedback you can use to develop new employees into even more valuable members of your team.

With theme-based selection, you truly can build a workforce that's entirely comprised of top performers. What possibilities would that create for your organization?



## REQUEST A **FREE CONSULTATION**

Want to learn more about theme-based selection and the impact it can have on your hiring? Book a free 30-minute consultation with a hiring specialist from Crown Global HR today!

**BOOK CONSULTATION**



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