

Marks Sattin | December 2019

HOW TO RECRUIT A MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT

An analytical study of our survey results



MARKS
SATTIN

INTRODUCTION

On December 12th 2019, the British public are the hiring managers for 650 very important roles. The process for electing new Members of Parliament is never short of criticism and, we as hiring a recruitment experts, want to share how we would apply our experience and knowledge to source the right person for this crucial role. This report is an exploration of how we would use our bespoke methods to hire a new Member of Parliament on behalf of the British public.

Whenever we engage with a client on a search mandate, we have a consulting session with the hiring manager and HR to put together a bespoke and robust process that, partnered with their needs and our experience, will lead to a successful hire. In this instance, the hiring manager is circa 52 million people, and so we reached out to our candidates and clients and asked them through a 31 question questionnaire on what they would be looking for in their Member of Parliament. This report, using our own responses and wider data, will provide an analysis of the results, a job description, an ideal interview process and lines of questioning to get the most out of our potential MPs.

Of course, this report is a bit of fun, however from exploring the way in which the current system works and looking intrinsically at our own internal processes, we believe there are a number of questions we should be asking ourselves with regards, not just to December 12th, but in the context of hiring in general. It is clear that in any hiring process, honesty, integrity and accountability are up-held at all times, and this could not be more accurate than during a General Election.

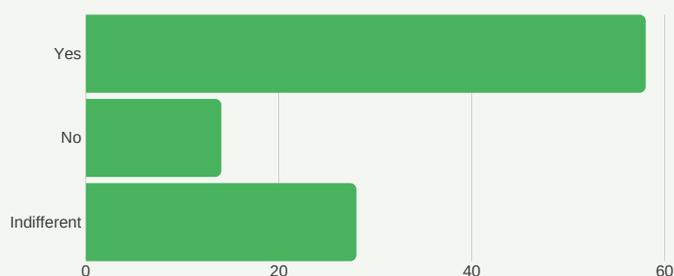
ANALYSIS

We had an incredible amount of respondents to our survey, with 161 responses within 48 hours. This general election is one of the most polarising political events of our life-time with several very clear issues dominating the race so far, including Brexit and the NHS. In an attempt to avoid alienation - and as this is an exercise in process and procurement - we elected to steer clear of any policy based questions; instead focusing on experience and character. The results threw up some surprises.

EDUCATION

Of those elected in 2017, 24% attended Oxbridge, 82% attended any university, 51% attended comprehensive schools and 29% paid for education (Sutton Trust).

DOES YOUR MP NEED TO HAVE COMPLETED ADVANCED LEVEL EDUCATION?



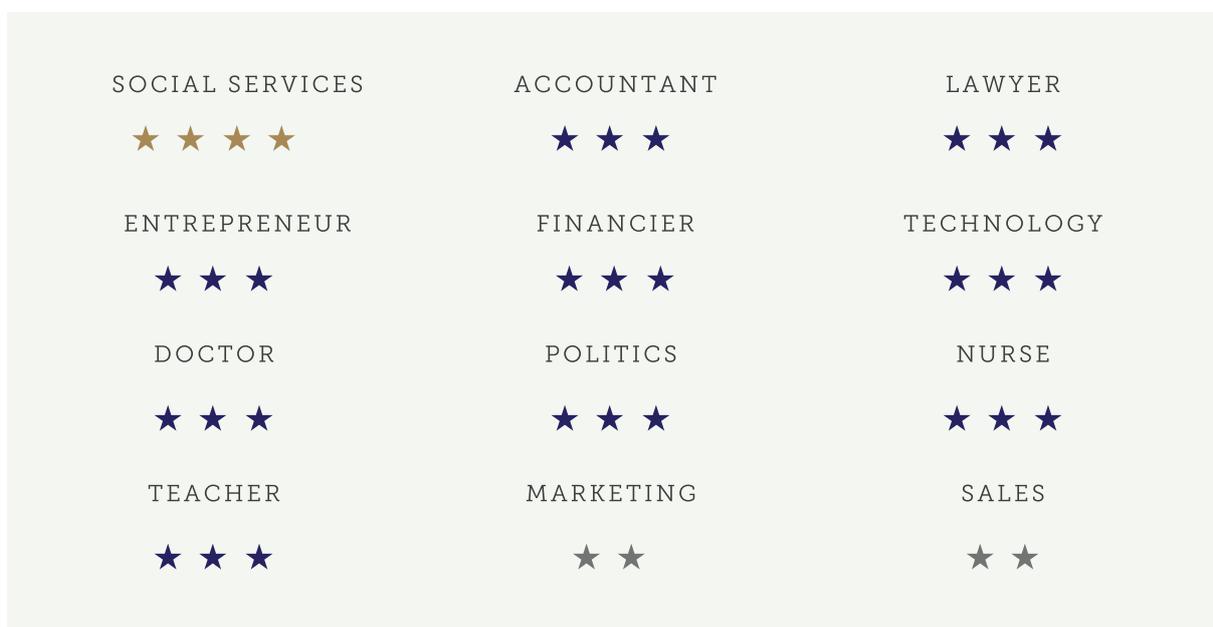
Educational background is always a contentious issue, particularly with Labour’s push to abolish private schools. The fact that only 7% of our population has attended private school was heavily peddled throughout the nation’s press which added to the image of our parliament being highly unrepresentative. 71% of respondents in our questionnaire did not mind where their prospective MP went to school, whilst 24% stated a preference for state school education. This latter number was unexpectedly high and perhaps signals complete disengagement or lack of trust with the system as it stands. Further to state or private background, 35% of respondents deemed University unimportant, and 27% felt indifferent about advanced education (A Levels, IB, Pre-U). With the current university attendance figure standing at 88%, this could be further evidence of disillusion with the current process. From the results, we drew the conclusion that university was not important but there was a need for advanced education, with 58% deeming it important and therefore we added this as essential on the job specification.

PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND

88% of respondents prefer their MP to have between 5 and 20 years of professional experience with less than 1% wanting those with over 30 years. More specifically, 47% of respondents chose 5-10 years’ experience as their preference. This is a stark contrast to its current form where 52% of the Commons is over 50 years of age and the average age is 50. Although since 2016, there has been an increase in engagement in politics from under 25’s, with the ‘youth quake’ hitting its peak at Glastonbury 2017 with chanting of ‘Oh, Jeremy Coorbyn’, it has failed to materialise at elections, with no significant increase in the youth vote at the 2017 General Election.

We found the lack of detail on professional experience alarming when looking through current MP candidate bios. Instead, when advertising themselves, candidates place a heavy emphasis on their beliefs and what they plan to do – not on what they have achieved professionally. Candidates are being elected based on promises and beliefs, not on experience. This is one of the biggest issues with the whole electoral process; in politics, or the marketing of candidates at least, there does not seem to be any need to show actual experience.

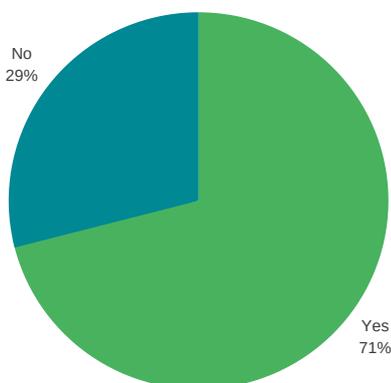
We asked respondents what professional backgrounds they believed to be most relevant for an MP and asked them to give each profession a 1-5 star rating:



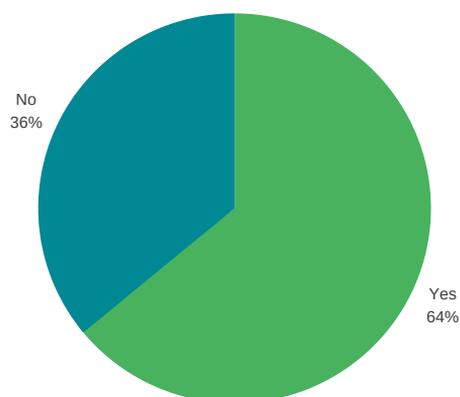
Sales and marketing were the least appealing career backgrounds. This is ironic considering candidates focus on qualities most common with sales people - that of beliefs and promises. The profession with the highest weighted average was social services. This answer was particularly interesting when you consider the costs of running to become an MP and the salaries of those within social services. Isabelle Hardman's book 'Why We Get the Wrong Politicians' placed a cost of standing for a parliamentary seat at £11,118. For a financier, this may be a small cost to absorb however for someone from the social services industry, it is a huge cost to bear and as such, is there any surprise that the public, in this case our respondents, do not see the candidates that they want in parliament? Cost of campaigning is an issue far too large for us to cover in this report however it is worth considering, particularly as we are over-throwing the entire current process. Without a robust process with proper interviews and fair selection based on personality and experience, money becomes a major factor; the average personal cost for a Tory who won a marginal seat was £121,467 and Labour at £19,022. Even seats considered to be safe were, on average, £13,617.

In a closed process with a predetermined salary, financial power of candidates does not affect a typical recruitment process and as such, we have the luxury of focusing on professional background. Our job spec will be open to candidates from all of these backgrounds however, through the interview process, there will be a heavier emphasis on legal expertise; part of our job is to consult our clients on technical backgrounds of candidates and from the work that MPs part-take in, we believe legal experience is most fitting.

SHOULD CANDIDATES BE INTERVIEWED BY A PSYCHOLOGIST / OR TAKE PART IN PERSONALITY TESTING?



SHOULD ONLINE TESTING BE USED AND THEIR RESULTS SHARED TO DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN CANDIDATES?



With Brexit being the fog that will not clear, it is perhaps unsurprising that our respondents believe both management and negotiating experience to be very important with weighted averages of 3.75 and 4.39, out of a value of 5. This aligns with the general consensus that the Brexit failure can be put down to a lack of leadership and negotiating expertise. Both these qualities are desired as we seek our candidate and will be tested at interview stage by psychometric testing. Only circa 30% of our standard mandates involve testing however, in this situation, we believe it to be essential. Furthermore, when looking at the results from the survey, 63% were in favour of testing and 71% in favour of a psychologist interview.

Testing adds a quantitative element to any process and allows for benchmarking on basic competencies. Moreover, personality testing is used by human resource teams to monitor and track personalities throughout their time of employment. With our hiring managers being the public, this would allow a level of accountability for not just the candidates but the hiring managers too. It promotes transparent

information and provides clear data metrics – something that is very lacking in this year’s election. Marks Sattin has several testing suppliers who we engage with and offer the service in-house for clients who do not have the infrastructure for testing. It can be a divisive technique, favoured mainly by human resource professionals however, we believe it to be a tool well worth using for a hire at this level.

DIVERSITY

Hand in hand with professional experience and skill-set, is diversity. Parliament is often criticised for its lack of proportionate representation; 32% of MPs are female, only 7% are openly LGBTQ, the average age of an MP is 50, 8% of MPs come from non-white backgrounds (as opposed to 14% of the population), 29% went to fee-paying schools and 24% went to Oxbridge. Diversity is one of the most important considerations in our industry today however, many companies reference it and few prioritise it. In recent years - partly due to legislation and research behind the merits of diversity - there has been a shift towards taking a proactive approach to increasing diversity within teams and companies. 61% of our respondents thought increased diversity within Parliament would result in better performance. This number should be higher; with relation to complex tasks and roles, demographic and cognitive diversity has a clear, statistically significant positive impact on performance.

A study by Boston Consulting Group found that “increasing the diversity of leadership teams leads to better innovation and improved financial performance.” The study looked at 1,700 companies across 8 countries and found a statistically significant correlation between diversity of management teams and overall innovation. “Companies that reported above average diversity on their management teams also reported innovation revenue that was 19% higher than that of companies with below average leadership diversity”. The BCG report also found statistically significant evidence of positive impacts on revenue, when isolating gender. This is no surprise, however with such clear benefits; promoting diversity continues to be a problem.

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When discussing diversity there are two major factors to consider; the first is that of inspiring those from all backgrounds to believe that they can work in any team or business, for example young women seeing women in powerful finance positions will increase the number of women choosing finance as a route. Role models are vital here. The second is improving both demographic and cognitive diversity within teams (not just focusing on gender or race).

Recruitment should be based on merit but also consider the positive effects of diverse thinking that leads to greater innovation. Recruiting to satisfy these two factors is extremely difficult under current UK law and instead we find ourselves focusing on the archaic ‘best male/female for the job’ without thinking about the wider team, knowledge spill-overs and the catalyst effect of diversity. Although 61% of participants believe that diversity would have a positive effect on the performance of Parliament, only 29% would like positive discrimination to take place within the search.

Interestingly, both Labour and the Liberal Democrats engage in 'All-Women-Shortlists' to increase the proportion of women within Parliament. At the same time, David Cameron introduced the Conservative Women's Organisation in 2005 which offers a 'Priority A-List' for women candidates. Although politics can seem to be all doom and gloom it is refreshing to see forward thinking from the UK's major parties.

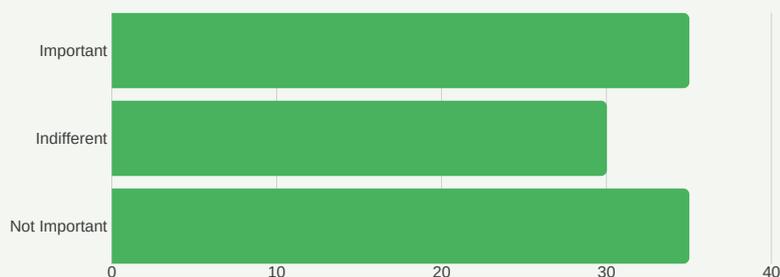
Without using positive discrimination, we as the search firm on this mandate would use advertising and promotion techniques to ensure all groups were reached. Marks Sattin is heavily involved in the promotion of diversity with our Financial Services Director sitting on the Women in Fund Finance panel discussion this year and our Private Equity team authoring thought pieces on the gender pay-gap. This unique network allows Marks Sattin to put together diverse shortlists that promote not just the 'best man/woman for the job' but the 'best man/woman for the team'.

PUBLIC PROFILE

Education, professional experience and diversity are nothing new in the search for a candidate. However, public profile is a specific requirement needed for this particular mandate. According to a 2018 CareerBuilder survey, 70% of employers use social media to screen candidates. We do not often see candidates rejected based on social media activity however, before interview stage they are certainly vetted by our clients. Within a public role it is even more important, making sure they are publicly active would aid in transparency and accountability.

One of the biggest changes in election campaigning is the scrutiny under which politicians are now held – for every off-the-cuff comment made by a candidate, there are thousands of people on Twitter ready to hold them accountable and fact check. In the long-run, this can only be a positive however in the short-run - and as we have seen in this campaign - we see subsequent ducking of public events and the avoidance of opportunities that risk embarrassment. The answer to the below question was nearly perfectly balanced and we found it surprising that so many respondents did not think it important for the candidate to be an active public figure. This could be a reflection of discussing an MP and not a Prime Minister, but still surprising that a public profile is not viewed as important.

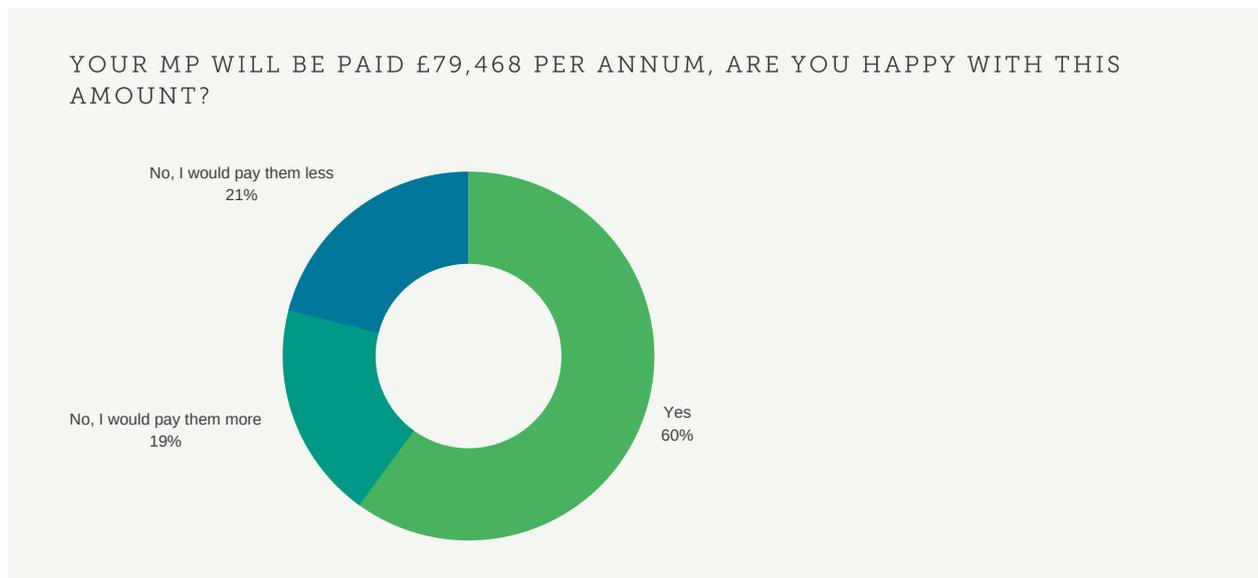
HOW IMPORTANT IS IT THAT AN MP IS AN ACTIVE PUBLIC FIGURE?



"ONE OF THE BIGGEST CHANGES IN ELECTION CAMPAIGNING IS THE SCRUTINY UNDER-WHICH POLITICIANS ARE NOW HELD – FOR EVERY OFF-THE-CUFF COMMENT MADE BY A CANDIDATE, THERE ARE THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE ON TWITTER READY TO HOLD THEM ACCOUNTABLE AND FACT CHECK."

REMUNERATION

The final point to consider is that of remuneration package and benefits. Of those asked, 60% are happy with the £79,468 salary, 19% would offer more and 21% would prefer to pay a successful candidate less.



As we noted the average cost of attaining a seat in Parliament earlier, we would not recommend reducing the pay. We would also suggest an annual bonus, however 69% did not believe MPs should receive an annual bonus. In terms of holidays and working hours, 34% of respondents believed that MPs should have between 25-28 days holiday, 61% want them to work 40-50 hour work weeks and 86% would allow flexible working in some form. All of the above are perfectly reasonable for a £79,468 salary and a role with such high importance.

Along with remuneration, bonuses and benefits, there are appraisals and ensuring that quality is maintained for a salary received. Unsurprisingly 81% of respondents believe the public should have the right to remove an MP from office if standards slip. Introducing an appraisal system is obviously an incredibly difficult task and we do not have a suggestion on how to implement it. What is clear is that there is strong demand for accountability and standards to be met and held.

SUMMARY

We've partnered our findings with our typical search process to form a job specification and interview process. With our respondents as our hiring manager, we have tailored the process as we would with any client; we consult initially and build bespoke and robust hiring plans that enable us to work collaboratively with our clients to find the very best fit. We believe this approach would not be a bad idea when searching for an MP.

JOB DESCRIPTION

BACKGROUND

The Parliament of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is the supreme legislative body of the United Kingdom, the Crown dependencies and the British Overseas Territories. It possesses legislative supremacy and thereby ultimate power over all other political bodies in the UK and the overseas territories.

In the United Kingdom, a Member of Parliament (MP) is an individual elected to serve in the House of Commons of the Parliament of the United Kingdom for a five-year term, or until the next general election. A MP receives a base salary of £79,468 a year, plus expenses.

THE ROLE

The successful candidate will be an MP within the House of Commons, tasked with the responsibility of representing the interests of their constituents and the wider country. You will work alongside other MP's, members of the civil service, members of local government and members of the public; reporting into your constituency association (local) and the Prime Minister/party whip (national). The role will play a key part in the democratic process of the country and you will be expected to adhere to the highest standards of integrity.

SPECIFIC DUTIES

Constituency (expected to be approx. 60% of your time)

- Attend constituency surgeries; answering constituent queries, giving advice and addressing any issues directed to you.
- Play an active role in the community.
- You are expected to spend at least 60% of your time on constituency matters as a "back-bench" MP.

National/Parliamentary

- Represent your constituents in parliament.
- Scrutinise, and ultimately vote on legislation introduced to parliament for approval. This will include contributions to parliamentary debate and discussion, addressing your fellow members of parliament and anyone else in the chamber.
- Raise questions during specific parliamentary sessions; addressing government ministers including the Prime Minister.
- Option to attend select committees. You are encouraged to try to play an active role in debates and negotiations.

Outside Parliament

- Attend and address events at various institutions including businesses, schools on a wide range of topics.
 - Represent your party and constituents by engaging with the media. This could include national and local radio, television or broadcast media, both public (BBC) and private. You are encouraged to have an active presence on social media
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POTENTIAL FOR PROGRESSION

When first becoming a MP, you will initially sit on the “back-benches” where less of your work will be at a national level. As you gain experience there are multiple avenues to progress within your role, depending on your effectiveness and where you want to contribute. Such avenues include:

- Becoming a government (or shadow government) junior minister within a given department. Here you would report into the department Minister of State and play a more active role in designing legislation.
 - With years of experience you could be selected to run a department yourself.
 - Sit on, and potentially one day chair, a select committee; with the responsibility of intensely scrutinising areas of government policy.
 - Become a member of the Privy Council.
 - Take a ceremonial role in the House of Commons, such as the Speaker.
 - Run for Prime Minister, the head of the United Kingdom government.
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THE CANDIDATE

Essential

- You must be a UK Citizen
- You must be over the age of 18
- You must have completed Advanced Level (A-Level) education or equivalent
- You must have at least 5 years of experience, up to 20 years
- You must be local to your constituency

Desired

- Good Verbal communication
 - Ability to handle criticism and perform under pressure
 - Analytical thinking
 - Negotiation
 - Management experience
 - Knowledge of court procedures and government regulations
 - A University degree
 - A background within Social Services, Accounting, Law, Business (entrepreneurial) and/or Politics
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WORKING ENVIRONMENT

As an MP you will be expected to work around 40-50 hours a week, with the prospect of working unsociable hours and weekends. We do offer flexible working.

INTERVIEW PROCESS

All of our search processes are tailored and bespoke to our clients. Before every strategy and process is implemented we consult our client on their priorities and motivations behind the hire. For this process, we have done this via our questionnaire. The process is as follows:

- Search undertaken by primary consultant, one researcher and another director.
- All shortlisted candidates are screened by both primary consultant and a director.
- We provide a dynamic market map (Google Drive excel sheet of possible candidates across relevant industries, updated as the search goes on). You will be able to access this at any time and see progress on listed candidates, their responses and outstanding actions.
- Bespoke questionnaire for improved screening; we put together a list of tailored questions that we present with our shortlist. This enables deeper and more engaging first interviews.
- Six week process - we can have a shortlist over to you within five working days.

WEEKLY BREAKDOWN

WEEK 1

We interview our long list of candidates and provide an executive summary on each including responses to bespoke questions.

WEEK 2

We will provide the hiring managers (reporting line to local constituency party and prime minister) with a shortlist of candidates alongside a report assessing each candidate's suitability and areas to consider during the interview process.

WEEK 3

First round interviews with hiring managers take place. In this instance, the first round will be with yourselves!

WEEK 4

Testing and psychologist interview. All remaining candidates will complete numerical, literacy and verbal reasoning tests. The aim of these tests is to find marginal differences. We would not reject a candidate based purely on these results but would advise to take the results into account to help with best judgement.

WEEK 5

Second stage interview with other members of the team. This stage allows for more informal questions, enabling hiring managers to assess cultural and team fit.

WEEK 6

Final round interview with the Prime Minister. The success of democratic nations has been largely underpinned by the ability to respect opposition ideas and allow differences, a PM should be able to push party politics aside and offer an unbiased character assessment on anyone who ultimately will be voting for and against laws that her or his party are pushing forward.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Following any successful placement we have a follow up service offered by our partner, Tack, who are specialists in personal development and offer executive coaching for senior placements for their first 90 days. This is an extra level of support that is beneficial to all new hires, the client and ourselves. Not only does it enable new hires to work more comfortably and develop faster but it enables a feedback loop-something that is incredibly important for all new hires.

RECOMMENDED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

As part of our process, we provide some assistance on questioning. The bespoke questionnaire that we develop with our clients for potential candidates helps get to the root of experience and personal qualities of our candidates. Below are some questions we would ask our prospective MPs:

Simple questions:

- What edge does your professional background give you in order to be the most successful candidate?
- What are the biggest challenges and successes you've had in relation to team management?
- How engaged are you within your constituency?
- How would you say your constituents would describe yourself?
- How would you represent your constituents on the national stage in parliament?
- Do you prioritise national/party interest ahead of the interest of your constituency?

Competency questions - we've listed some of our favourites, specific to this scenario:

- How do you and your team identify and deliver the standards required by your customers?
- Give me an example of how you've demonstrated an understanding of customer/client needs?
- How do you respond to feedback?
- Can you describe a time when you've been proactive in finding a solution to a problem encountered by your customers?
- What is the biggest risk that you've taken, and how did you handle the process?
- Describe one of your current or recently completed projects, setting out the risks involved. How did you make decisions? How do you know that you made the correct ones?
- Give us an example of when you took responsibility for delivering expected outcomes, giving credit to other teams and individuals where appropriate.
- Tell us about a time when you had to sacrifice quality in order to speed up a project.
- Tell us about a time when you used written communication to successfully influence someone. How did you go about structuring your writing?
- Demonstrate how you vary your communication approach according to the audience you're addressing.
- Tell us about a situation where your communication skills made a difference to a situation.
- Tell us about a situation when you failed to communicate appropriately.
- Describe a situation where you had to explain something complex to a colleague or a client. Which problems did you encounter and how did you deal with them?

Finally, we also asked our respondents to give us killer questions for any final round interview. Below are some of the best responses:

- What is your number one priority for your constituency and/or parliament?
- How will you represent all your constituents and reduce the political division in the UK?
- What tax reforms would you recommend?
- What is the most positive change you've made in your career so far?
- How would you repair trust between disillusioned members of the public and the role of an MP?
- What are the services you use in your constituency?
- In one sentence, why do you want this role?