

INTERVIEW GUIDE

3-Step Interview Guide for LED & Solar

A practical framework for interviewing solar and LED retrofit candidates — technical fit, motivational fit, and culture fit, with real questions for each.

One framework, ten roles, and a scorecard you can actually compare across candidates.

This guide gives you a consistent 3-step interview framework — technical fit, motivational fit, culture fit — plus role-specific technical questions for the ten positions commercial LED retrofit and solar contractors recruit for most. Use the general framework for every candidate, then pull the questions for their specific role from the reference section.

Score each step 1-5 as you go. A candidate who's strong on technical fit but weak on culture fit is a different hiring decision than one who's the reverse — the scorecard makes that visible instead of relying on a gut "good interview" feeling.

3-STEP FRAMEWORK

Technical fit. Motivational fit. Culture fit. In that order.

Most solar and electrical interviews go straight to "tell me about your experience" and never verify anything concrete. This guide gives you three structured steps, each with real questions, so you leave the interview with actual signal — not just a good feeling.

Step 1 — Technical fit: confirm NABCEP certification or electrical license directly with the issuing body, then ask scope- and code-specific questions.

Step 2 — Motivational fit: understand why they're moving and whether they're chasing pay, growth, or both.

Step 3 — Culture fit: safety mindset, especially around roof and height work, and how they work with a crew.

STEP 1

Technical fit — verify, don't assume.

Before the interview: confirm NABCEP certification status directly with NABCEP, and confirm any claimed electrical license directly with the issuing state board. This takes minutes and eliminates the single most common bad-hire cause in this trade.

Ask in the room:

- "Walk me through a commercial rooftop or ground-mount install you ran start to finish." (Listen for real project scale, not just residential experience described as if it were commercial.)
- "What's your process for interconnection and inverter tie-in on a commercial system?"
- "Tell me about the last time an inspection flagged an issue on your work. What did you do?" (Listen for ownership and a real process, not blame-shifting.)
- For LED retrofit candidates specifically: "Walk me through diagnosing a fixture and driver compatibility issue on a retrofit job."
- For low-voltage/controls candidates: "What lighting-control systems have you programmed and adjusted, not just installed?"

STEP 2

Motivational fit — why now, and are they chasing pay, growth, or both.

- "What made you start looking?" (Vague answers here are a bigger flag than an honest "the growth path wasn't there.")
- "Do you want to stay hands-on installing, or are you working toward a foreman or PM role?"
- "Tell me about a project that didn't go the way you planned. What did you do?"
- "What does a bad day on this job look like to you, and what do you do about it?"

Candidates who can talk specifically about how they handle a schedule slip, a permitting delay, or a difficult inspection tend to be far more reliable hires than candidates who only talk in generalities about "hard work."

STEP 3

Culture fit — safety and crew dynamics.

- "Tell me about a near-miss or safety concern you raised on a roof or height-work job. What happened?" (You want someone who speaks up, not someone who says "I've never had one.")
- "How do you handle it when a crewmate isn't following fall-protection procedure?"
- "What's your take on PPE compliance when it slows you down?"
- "How do you like to receive feedback from a foreman or inspector?"

Red flags checklist

- Can't describe a specific commercial-scale project when pressed — only residential-scale or generic answers
- NABCEP certification or electrical license can't be verified, or claims a status the issuing body doesn't show as active
- Blames every past employer or inspector for every problem, with no self-reflection
- Dismisses fall-protection or safety questions as "not a big deal"

Score every candidate on the same four dimensions.

DIMENSION	1-2	3	4-5
Technical skill	Can't confirm scope, code, or certification status	Confirms basics, vague on commercial-scale work	Specific on scope, code, and largest commercial project run
Stability	Frequent short stints, vague reasons	Reasonable tenure, plausible reasons	Strong tenure or clear, specific reason for each move
Culture fit	Dismisses safety, blames others	Says the right things generically	Specific safety story, owns mistakes
Trajectory	No interest in certification or licensing growth	Open to it, no plan	Actively pursuing NABCEP certification or advanced licensing

A candidate scoring 4-5 across the board is a fast yes. A candidate scoring 1-2 on technical skill is a no regardless of the other three — verified competence is non-negotiable in this trade.

Solar PV Installer & NABCEP-Certified Solar Technician.

Solar PV Installer: "What's the largest commercial rooftop or ground-mount system you've installed?" · "How do you handle racking and mounting on a roof type you haven't worked before?"

NABCEP-Certified Solar Technician: "Walk me through your NABCEP certification path — what training provider, how many hours, when did you sit the exam?" · "What's changed in your approach since you got certified versus before?"

Commercial LED Retrofit Electrician & Solar Electrician.

LED Retrofit Electrician: "Walk me through diagnosing a fixture that won't stay lit after a driver swap." · "How do you handle utility rebate documentation on a retrofit job?"

Solar Electrician: "Walk me through a grid interconnection you handled from permitting to commissioning." · "How do you handle an inverter tie-in that doesn't match the as-drawn plans?"

Solar Project Manager & Solar Estimator/Designer.

Solar Project Manager: "Tell me about a commercial solar project where the schedule slipped. What did you do?" · "How do you coordinate between the installation crew and the interconnecting electrician?"

Solar Estimator/Designer: "Walk me through a PV system sizing and takeoff on a commercial roof." · "Tell me about a bid you lost and what you learned from the debrief."

Energy Auditor/Efficiency Consultant & Solar O&M Technician.

Energy Auditor: "Walk me through a building energy assessment that led into an LED retrofit or solar scope." · "How do you prioritize recommendations when the client has a limited budget?"

Solar O&M Technician: "What's your process for diagnosing an underperforming string on a commercial array?" · "Tell me about a maintenance issue you caught before it became a bigger failure."

Electrical Foreman (LED/Solar specialty) & Low-Voltage/Controls Technician.

Electrical Foreman: "How do you sequence a crew across a retrofit and a new solar install competing for the same equipment?" · "Tell me about a time you had to pull someone off a job for quality or safety reasons."

Low-Voltage/Controls Technician: "What lighting-control systems have you programmed, not just installed?" · "Walk me through troubleshooting a controls system that isn't responding to a schedule change."

Move fast once verification is done — this market doesn't wait.

Once you've verified NABCEP status or electrical licensing directly and the candidate scores well across all four scorecard dimensions, don't let the offer sit. In a genuine growth market with real competition for the same certified and licensed candidates, a strong candidate who scored well in your process is very likely in someone else's process too.

If you're building this pipeline continuously rather than per-opening, this is exactly the stage where a standing, credential-verified bench pays for itself — you're not starting the search from zero every time a seat opens.

Four ways this interview goes wrong before it starts.

- **Taking "NABCEP certified" or a claimed license at face value.** Verify directly with the issuing body before the interview, not after the offer — this is the single most common source of a bad hire in this trade.
- **Assuming residential experience equals commercial readiness.** Ask specifically about commercial-scale projects; a strong residential installer isn't automatically ready for a commercial rooftop scope.
- **Skipping the safety conversation because the resume looks strong.** This is roof and height work — a technically excellent installer with a dismissive attitude toward fall protection is still a liability risk.
- **Making the offer slowly.** In a fast-growing, scarce-credential market, a strong candidate rarely stays uncontacted for long. Compress the time between a passing scorecard and an offer.

The eight questions to ask every candidate, regardless of role.

Walk me through the largest commercial project you've worked on start to finish.

What certification or license do you hold, and when did you last renew it?

Tell me about the last time an inspection flagged an issue on your work.

What made you start looking for something new?

Tell me about a project that didn't go as planned.

Tell me about a near-miss or safety concern you raised.

How do you like to receive feedback from a foreman or inspector?

Where do you want to be in this trade in two years — still hands-on, or moving toward lead/PM work?



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