Let's face it. There are many great hiring managers out there, but few are good at interviewing. Over the course of my career, I've interviewed thousands of people and it has taken me a while to figure out what works. Is there a "silver bullet" question out there? No. But there is a question that will help you peel the layers of the onion of each candidate you evaluate:

What single project or task would you consider the most significant accomplishment in your career so far?

Think about it. What would you say? Then imagine over the course of the next 15-20 minutes I dug deeper and asked you about the following. How would you respond?

- Can you give me a detailed overview of the accomplishment?
- Tell me about the company, your title, your position, your role, and the team involved.
- What were the actual results achieved?
- When did it take place and how long did the project take.
- Why you were chosen?
- What were the 3-4 biggest challenges you faced and how did you deal with them?
- Where did you go the extra mile or take the initiative?
- Walk me through the plan, how you managed to it, and if it was successful.
- Describe the environment and resources.
- Describe your manager's style and whether you liked it or not.
- Describe the technical skills needed to accomplish the objective and how they were used.
- Some of the biggest mistakes you made.
- Aspects of the project you truly enjoyed.
- Aspects you didn't especially care about and how you handled them.
- How you managed and influenced others, with lots of examples.
- How you were managed, coached, and influenced by others, with lots of examples.
- How you changed and grew as a person.
- What you would do differently if you could do it again.
- What type of formal recognition did your receive?

Why is this effective? It allows you to compare what the candidate accomplished compared to what needed to be accomplished. Did they exceed, meet, or fall short? If the accomplishment was comparable to a real job requirement, and if the answer was detailed enough to take 15-20 minutes to complete, consider how much an interviewer would know about your ability to handle the job.