

PREPARATION OF INTERVIEWS FOR THE EMPLOYER

The cost of a bad hire is expensive, and it's not just the wasted salary that's costly, severance payments, training time, potential customer problems, and recruiting a replacement are all items that blow the budget. Many experts estimate that the cost of a bad hire exceeds the annual salary of a position!



This makes it clear how important it is to ensure the recruitment process is done properly, especially interviews, because the outcome of these often dictates who we will hire.

It's a good idea, if possible, to include other colleague/s to assist you with interviewing, as the use of multiple interviewers greatly increases the reliability of the process and different interviewers in separate, subsequent interviews are more likely to agree on the right candidate.

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

Understanding the Position

Start by finding/preparing a job analysis. It is a good idea for interviewers to consult with at least one "Subject Matter Expert," to generate a specific list of the most important aspects of the job and what is required to perform it successfully; usually the person that the position reports to will be able to assist with this.

Also think about previous people who have held the position and what skills, knowledge, and personal qualities made them successful or unsuccessful. If possible, ask these people or their supervisors what factors contribute to being a good candidate for the job. Make a list of these factors and make sure that everyone involved with the selection process agrees that these are the criteria they are looking for.

Preparing Questions

Once you are clear about the skills, knowledge and qualities the job requires, the next step is to prepare questions in advance which will enable you to extract the information you need and will help avoid wasting time by going off track with irrelevant detail. All candidates should be asked the same questions to make their responses more directly comparable.

Since it is important that all candidates get the same opportunity to answer the same questions — without feeling rushed — it is generally best to limit the number of interview questions. A good rule of thumb is to ask no more than four to six questions in a 30 minute interview, and no more than eight to 12 questions in a one hour interview.

There is a theory that past performance is an excellent predictor of future performance and to ensure that you get as close to the truth as possible when extracting information from candidates, ask questions that require the person to give answers based on previous experience. These questions are referred to as Behavioural Questions, e.g., "Tell me about a time when you initiated a project that resulted in increased productivity?"



Instead of asking general questions, the interviewer asks for specific examples that demonstrate skills. For instance, instead of asking, "Do you have initiative?" the interviewer would ask for an example of a time when the candidate demonstrated initiative. Most behavioural interview questions start with phrases like "tell me about a time" or an adverb such as what, where, why, or when, so you're not asking someone if they have done something but rather you are asking them how they have done it, making it more difficult to exaggerate or fake answers.



Another advantage of behavioural interviewing is that because the answers are based on actual past experience, they can be double-checked and verified with former employers when doing references; most professional recruiters dedicate the majority of each interview to this type of questioning.

Here are some general interview questions you may like to choose from, to get you started, (16 – 22 are Behavioural Questions):

1. *What were your three biggest accomplishments in you last jobs? In your career?*
2. *What part of your job do you enjoy the most?*
3. *How could you make your current job better?*
4. *If you could design the perfect job for yourself, what would you do? Why?*
5. *What additional responsibilities would you like to see in a new job?*
6. *Tell me about your education/designation/courses? Which course(s) do you/did you like best? Why did you like it best? Which course did you dislike? Why?*
7. *Describe your ideal boss? What do you expect in regards to his/her management style?*
8. *Why are you looking for new employment?*
9. *What interests you most about this company? This position?*
10. *How does your past experience make you qualified for this particular position?*
11. *What value can you bring to this new job?*
12. *What can you do for our company that no one else can?*
13. *How far do you think you can go in this company? Why?*
14. *What do you expect to be doing in five years?*
15. *Who do you use for references? What will they tell me about your performance, attendance, attitude, and teamwork skills?*
16. *Give an example of how you structure your time?*
17. *Tell me about some deadlines you need to meet in your current/previous position. Give an example of when it looked like the deadline was not going to be met. How did you deal with this and what was the outcome?*
18. *Describe a difficult work situation with a co-worker and how did you resolve the situation?*
19. *Describe situations where your work was criticized.*
20. *What creates stress for you on the job? Give some examples.*
21. *Give an example of how you have eliminated stress in the workplace.*
22. *What are your strengths/weaknesses? Give examples.*
23. *What are your salary expectations and when are you available to start?*

Making Candidates Feel Comfortable

At the start of the interview you want to develop rapport and make the candidate as relaxed as possible; a good way to break the ice is to determine from their CV, in advance, if there is something of mutual interest that could be discussed briefly before starting the interview.

It also helps relax the candidates if you prepare an interview venue that is neat, comfortable and private, so that there can be no interruptions.



DURING THE INTERVIEW



The initial few moments of an interview are the most crucial. As you meet the candidate and shake his or her hand, you will gain a strong impression of his or her poise, confidence and enthusiasm (or lack thereof). Qualities to look for include good communication skills, a neat and clean appearance, and a friendly and enthusiastic manner.

After that, move on to briefly explain the job and describing the company, it's business, history and future plans.

Next, you will want to ask questions about several general areas, such as related experience, skills, educational training and background, and unrelated jobs. Open each area with a general open-ended question, such as "Tell me about your last job." Avoid questions that can be answered with a 'yes' or 'no' or that prompt

obvious responses, such as "Are you detail-oriented?" Instead, ask questions that force the candidate to go into detail. The best questions are follow-up questions, such as "How did that situation come about?" or "Why did you do that?" These queries force applicants to abandon pre-planned responses and dig deeper.

Your candidate's responses will give you a window in his or her knowledge, attitude and sense of humour. Watch for signs of "sour grapes" about former employers. Also be alert for areas people seem reluctant to talk about. Probe a little deeper without sounding judgmental.

Pay attention to the candidate's nonverbal cues, too. Does she seem alert and interested, or does she slouch and yawn? Are his clothes wrinkled and stained or clean and neat? A person who can't make an effort for the interview certainly won't make one on the job if hired.

Finally, leave time at the end of the interview for the applicant to ask questions -- and pay attention to what he or she asks. This is the time when applicants can really show they have done their homework and researched your company or, that all they care about is what they can get out of the job.

All the while, take detailed notes, this not only creates a professional atmosphere for the interview, it also makes a candidate feel respected, listened to and encouraged. And since human memory is limited, most interviewers can't remember every candidate's answer to every question. Making a set of specific notes for each interview also allows interviewers to be specific about why they came to certain conclusions about candidates.

End the interview by letting the candidate know what to expect next. How much longer will you be interviewing? When can they expect to hear from you? You are dealing with other people's livelihoods, so the week that you take to finish your interviews can seem like an eternity to them. Show some consideration by keeping them informed.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

It is courteous, professional and considerate to regret unsuccessful candidates timeously.

So, it's worthwhile taking the time to prepare for and conduct interviews thoroughly and properly to make sure the best person for the job is hired, and to avoid the pain that goes with a bad hire.

