**Creating a Great Experience for Candidates and Hiring Managers – Interview Guide**

**Preparing for the Interview**

Prior to the interview, organize and review the following:

* Candidate resume
* Candidate pre-screen
* Interview guide

**Interviewing the candidate**

**When candidates are at ease, they tend to reveal more information about themselves. Spend a few minutes engaging in casual conversation prior to asking interview questions, to put the candidate at ease.**

*Past behavior is the best predictor of future behavior. What the applicant has done in the past is a better indicator of future job success than what s/he believes, feels, thinks or knows should happen.*

*Past performance can also be a good indicator of how one will perform in the future. Questions that specifically address one’s past performance could help determine how the candidate will perform in the position. Encourage the candidate to provide specific examples with good details. This will help ensure the candidate is providing real examples from their past experience. While typically hypothetical questions are not always ideal, you can also ask candidates hypothetical performance questions to see how they would address a problem or situation and what type of solution they would suggest.*

**Techniques for Digging Deeper**

* Paraphrase—”Let me make sure I understand, you said…”
* Pause for effect—allow silence to force additional detail
* Directed feedback—”So, you initiated that marketing plan?”
* Non-verbal—nodding, hand gestures, smiling, quizzical look, etc.

**The more information you have about the candidate, the easier it is to detect his/her true abilities.**

**Be certain when taking notes that yours are objective assessments of the candidate’s ability to perform the *essential functions of the job.***

**In judging a candidate:**

* Make sure you base any judgment on all of the information presented by the candidate. A single bit of information is not enough to draw a valid conclusion.
* Look for repetition of behavior or comments, not isolated instances.
* Do not jump to conclusions, let the information gathered in the interview point you in the right direction.
* If something doesn’t feel right, you are probably correct in your conclusion. Try not to rationalize observed behaviors or statements.

**“Selling” the position and company**

Consider what your company offers that makes you stand out and emphasize it! Some examples include:

* Quality of life?
* Culture?
* Higher pay? Better benefits?
* Company mission?
* Better career opportunities and growth?
* Greater financial stability as a company?
* A step up, position, brand or company wise?

**Common Interview Mistakes and Suggestions for a Successful Interview**

**Lack of preparation**

Arriving late, coming across as rushed or flustered, and not familiarizing yourself with the candidate’s background sends a signal that the candidate (and meeting) is not high on your priority list.

*Get to know your candidate and do the important prep work* ***prior*** *to the meeting. Do you best to avoid unnecessary interruptions.*

**Rushing the interview**

Immediately jumping into interview questions without first making the candidate comfortable and establishing rapport will net far less information than spending the time initially to “create a great experience.” With a hurried start and rushed questions, the interview becomes a token gesture rather than a meaningful dialogue between you and the potential employee.

*Ease into the interview, offer something to drink (if in person and you haven’t already), initiate “small talk,” and let the candidate know what s/he can expect during the meeting. Plan in advance to spend whatever amount of time is necessary to make a solid assessment of the candidate.*

**Asking inefficient questions**

Broad versus specific (e.g. “Tell me about yourself”) questions leave candidates wondering where to start. Closed (e.g. can be answered with a “yes” or “no”) versus open-ended

questions yield little detail. Multiple questions asked at once overwhelm candidates, resulting in a partial response.

*Tie your questions in to specific behaviors and attributes required of the position and how candidates have exhibited those behaviors in the past. It’s okay to ask multi-layered questions; however ask one question at a time. And don’t be afraid to ask tough questions!*

**In-actively listening**

Allowing interruptions, focusing on another task while the candidate talks, providing little to no encouragement through non-verbal gestures, exhibiting closed body language and interrupting the candidate clearly signal that you’re not listening and not interested.

*Practice active listening techniques through regular eye contact, acknowledging responses, paraphrasing or asking for clarification and open body language. Non-verbal gestures are even more important in a video interview.*

**Not asking follow up questions**

Accepting answers at face value rarely nets the “nitty gritty” true details of how people *really* performed in the past. When a candidate has something to hide, they are likely hoping you won’t take the time to probe for additional information.

*Politely insist on a response to all questions, don’t be afraid to ask additional questions until you are satisfied with the answer. Use silence as a means of “forcing” an answer—candidates will typically divulge real details when put on the spot to answer.*

**Talking too much**

Interviewers are sometimes more comfortable with talking at length about what they know versus asking a candidate challenging questions to determine what they know. However, the more you’re talking, the less you’re learning about your candidate.

*Employ the 80/20 rule, where you talk 20% of the time and your candidate talks 80% of the time.*

**Using the interview as personal “therapy” or for industry gossip**

Some interviewers use their meeting time to spout concerns about the company and/or rumors or information about other companies. If you vent about your own company you’ll likely lose a potential candidate. When you gossip about other companies, you may find familiar ground with a candidate but appear unprofessional in the process.

*Keep the conversation focused on obtaining as much information as possible about the candidate’s ability to perform the essential functions of the job and culture fit.*

**Over- or underselling the company**

In an effort to lure potential candidates, some interviewers may be tempted to hype the success and gloss over the challenges the company is facing. At best, you’re potentially setting the candidate up for disappointment. At worst, you can be held liable for promises made that go unrealized.

*Don’t paint an unrealistic picture of the company. Be frank and balanced in discussing the positives and negatives. Your candidate will appreciate hearing realistic expectations.*

**Forming instant judgments about a candidate’s “hireability”**

Some interviewers decide within a few minutes whether a candidate is hire-able, oftentimes based on “gut” reactions. However, gut reactions are often based on highly subjective, limited information that is typically related to the interviewer’s own personal biases.

*Let the information gathered through the* ***entire*** *interview point you in the right direction. Look for patterns of behavior or comments, not isolated instances—a single bit of information is not enough to draw valid conclusions.*

**Interviewing inconsistently**

At worst, asking different questions of different candidates and/or requiring some candidates to go through a certain interview step while others don’t have to leaves a company vulnerable to claims of disparate treatment in the interview process. At best, inconsistent interviewing practices yield less reliable long-term performance results.

*Make your interviewing job easier by consistently using the interview tools that have already been created! Consistent use of an interview guide helps ensure legal hiring practices, an objective and thorough examination of a candidate’s abilities and will result in a more natural and efficient interview meeting.*

**\*\*ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS OF THE JOB\*\***

Notes taken around subjective factors such as age, gender, weight, personality, family issues, ethnicity, etc. may create legal trouble, as they are irrelevant to the candidate’s ability to perform the essential functions of the job.

**ILLEGAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:**

Always remember, an applicant should only be asked job-related questions. Please use the following information as a guide if you are unsure about a topic’s relevance to judging the applicant’s qualifications.

Illegal interview questions most often relate to:

* Memberships in organizations associated with a particular race, religion, or ethnic group
* Age • Birthplace
* Gender • Marital Status
* Sexual orientation
* General inquiries for information about arrests, disabilities or health conditions unrelated to job performance

|  | **Don’t Ask!** | **Okay to Ask** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Race, National Origin**  **or Ancestry** | * Are you a U.S. Citizen? * What is your race? * How do you feel about working with/ being supervised, or supervising a person of another race? * Where were you or your parents born? * What country are you from? * What is your national origin? * What nationality is your name? * What is your spouse’s nationality? * What is your maiden name? | * Are you legally eligible for employment in the U.S.? * Do you have the ability to speak/write English fluently? (ask only if job-related) |
| **Language** | * What is your native language? * How did you acquire the ability to read, write, or speak a foreign language? | * Inquire into languages the applicant speaks and writes fluently (only if the job requires additional languages). |
| **Sexual Preference, Marital Status and Family** **Arrangements** | * Are you married? * Are you single/divorced/ separated? * Are you homosexual? * Do you have any children?/How many?/How old? * Are you pregnant? * Are you on birth control? * What are your childcare arrangements? * Who lives in your house? * Do you have health care coverage through your spouse? * Will your spouse allow you to travel? | What hours and days can you work?  * Are there specific times that you cannot work? * Do you have responsibilities other than work that will interfere with specific job requirements such as traveling? * Do you have reliable transportation? |
| Name | What is your maiden name?  * Has your name been changed by court order? | * Have you ever used any other name? * Is additional information, relative to an assumed name or nickname, necessary to check job references? |
| **Gender** | * Do you wish to be addressed as Mr., Mrs., Miss, or Ms.? | * No question would be applicable or appropriate. |
| **Disability** | Are you handicapped?Do you have any disabilities?  * Are you physically or mentally impaired? * Have you or do you have any medical problems? * Have you had any prior work injuries? * Have you ever filed for worker’s compensation? | * Are you able to perform the essential functions of the job for which you are applying? |
| **Religion & Organizations** | What is your religious affiliation?What religious holidays do you observe?List all clubs, societies, and lodges to which you belong.  * What is the name of your church? | * Are there any organizations that you belong to that would be relevant to this job? |
| **Age & Education** | How old are you?  * What is your date of birth? * When did you graduate from school? * Did you belong to any ethnic, social or religious affiliations of the schools you attended? Any sororities/ fraternities? | * Are you under the age of 18? * Are you 16 years of age or older? * Can you show proof of age upon hire? * Do you have a high school diploma or equivalent? * Do you have a university or college degree? (depending on position requirements) * What schools have you attended? |
| **Military** | * What is the status of your discharge? * What was your branch of service? * What is your veteran status? | * What training did you receive in the military? |
| **Arrests & Convictions/ Financial Records** | * Have you ever been arrested? * How many times? * Have you ever filed for bankruptcy? | * Have you ever been convicted of a felony? If so, when, where, and what was the disposition of the case (only if job-related). |
| **Emergency Notification** | * What is the name, address and relationship of relative or other individual to be notified in case of accident or emergency? | * What is the name of an individual to be notified in case of accident or emergency? (Will be required upon job hire). |
| **Other** | * Do you smoke? * What color are your eyes? * What color is your hair? * What is your weight and height? * How long have you lived at your present address? * Do you own your own home? * What was your previous address? * How long did you reside there? * Do you have any foreign residences? | * We have a non-smoking policy, can you adhere to it? * What is your current address? |

**COMMON “RED FLAGS” TO LOOK FOR IN AN INTERVIEW**

In addition to listening attentively for appropriate answers to your job-related questions, you should also be observant for some “red flags.” The following items indicate problematic behavior from the candidate:

* Arrives late for the interview, without a valid excuse or advanced warning
* Unprofessional “presentation” of oneself or inappropriately dressed
* Does not maintain good eye contact with the interviewer
* Responds in an unfocused, disorganized, and/or rambling manner
* Remains low-key and displays no enthusiasm for the job; overall lacks energy
* Answers most questions with simple “yes” or “no” answers; getting additional response is difficult

## Appears desperate for a job – any job

* Speaks negatively of their current or former employer
* Uses profanity or inappropriate language at any time during the interview
* Excessive nervousness, so much so that it negatively impacts the interview

**CANDIDATE FOLLOW-UP**

* Always send an email response within 24-48 hours of receiving an application/resume.
* Always follow-up with all candidates you’ve talked with to let them know whether or not you will be moving forward. Be sure to decline all candidates in a timely manner. Treating all candidates professionally protects not only our brand as an employer, but also your brand overall.

**Top 10 Hiring and Interviewing Tips for Moving Diversity Forward**

1. **Select for the whole person.** Don’t rely solely or too much on traditional criteria such as GPA and school rankings. Some individuals who are exceptional in regard to traditional criteria may be missing some other important attributes, and vice-versa. To determine a more holistic set of criteria, analyze who is successful in your work environment. What are the qualities they possess? What kinds of people do you want to define your organization and help achieve the organization’s vision and goals? What are the competencies, skills, and qualifications actually needed for the position? Make sure that among those competencies is the willingness to work collaboratively and respectfully with people from diverse backgrounds.
2. **Design a hiring process that allows for diverse input.** Assemble a diverse group of people (in regard to gender, race, ethnicity, age, job status, role, tenure, geography, etc.) to offer input on what the attributes of an ideal candidate should be. Have this group help evaluate candidates.
3. **Don’t "over-hire."** Diversity and excellence go hand in hand. Be clear about and hold to your standards of excellence. Don’t hire women, people of color, LGBT candidates or others from historically excluded and underrepresented groups who do not satisfy the holistic set of qualifications solely because you want to increase diversity in your organization. To do so is to set up the individual you hire to fail and to contribute to the assumptions by some that the organization has lowered its standards for candidates from one-down groups—groups who have been treated as inferior historically in the United States and have experienced less privilege and power as a result. If there is a person who doesn’t meet all the criteria but shows great potential, only hire them if you are willing to inform them of, and shore up, the areas where they are deficient.
4. **Don’t "under-hire."** Don’t bypass talented candidates from one-down groups who meet your holistic criteria because of expressed or silent concerns about whether they can perform according to your standards. Some one-down group members are perceived as risks so evaluators unintentionally require additional proof that these individuals are capable despite the indicia they have provided of their accomplishments. Don’t let decision-makers default to assessing a candidate on traditional criteria rather than looking at what the candidate brings as a whole. Each person should be judged as an individual, not on their group’s record of success in the organization. If someone meets the established grade cutoff or has the level of education needed for the job, don’t raise the bar and ask that they demonstrate greater achievements than other candidates from more traditional backgrounds. And don’t yield to tokenism, where the organization is satisfied with and resigned to hiring only one or two exceptional candidates from a one-down group.
5. **Engage in interviewing training.** Getting the "right people onto the bus"—employing talented individuals who are aligned with the organization’s mission is among the most imperative tasks of any successful organization. Everyone who interviews should participate in interview training that includes an emphasis on hiring candidates from one-down groups. Translate agreed upon criteria into questions that can be asked of candidates in the interview. Inform everyone involved in the hiring process of these criteria and questions.
6. **Focus on job-related criteria in the interview**. Don’t get personal in the interview conversation, especially when interviewing candidates from one-down groups. They often experience these types of questions and find them extremely off-putting. You can have an individualized, pleasant conversation without asking personal, invasive questions stemming from your curiosity or assumptions. There are some questions you have a right to ask only after the candidate is hired and you have made the effort to establish a mutually respectful relationship.
7. **Don’t trust your gut!** I know many of us think we know instinctively who would be "a good fit" for our organizations. But we have to watch out for our unconscious biases—those for and against individuals and groups. Neuroscience tells us that our minds are good but not perfect at quick judgments. Our guts can be contaminated with stereotypes and biases. Bias can cause us to offend, exclude, or “mis-hire.” Notice not only when a feeling of discomfort arises in an interaction with a candidate but also when one of unwarranted ease occurs—these are clues that you may be relying too heavily on your gut instincts. You want everyone who interviews with your organization to leave the interaction believing they had a fair and respectful exchange. Even if you don’t want to hire the candidate, he or she may have a friend whom you would love to hire. Word of mouth, positive or negative, can have a major impact on your recruiting efforts on school campuses and within your industry.
8. **Don’t seek to replicate yourself.** Even though we all suffer from in-group favoritism—we like and favor those in our own group—diversity demands we expand our understanding of who is valuable. Dig a little more deeply into the candidate’s experiences, especially if they are different from yours. If you don’t know about entries on a resume (associations, articles, group memberships, neighborhoods, countries, etc.), because they are unfamiliar to, you don’t ignore them—inquire about them. These questions may lead to some of the most valuable insights about what makes an interviewee unique and whether he or she is right for the position.
9. **Don’t make assumptions about the interviewee.** Assumptions about where and how someone grew up, what they experienced, and their likes and dislikes are usually stereotypes about groups. If you lead with questions that are rooted in stereotypes, you may offend the candidate and lose the opportunity to bring a talented person into your organization. Take your cue from interviewees. If they bring up concerns about gender issues or speak about their humble background, this is a signal that you could engage a conversation around these subjects. But even then, be careful to seek information rather than make generalizations or assumptions.
10. **Share your diversity commitment with all candidates.** Make sure you share information about your diversity commitment and policies with every candidate, not only those from one-down groups. You can’t tell what candidates are interested in, what they are sensitive to, or the topics or areas with which they hold an affinity. After all, your diversity program is about making the entire organization better, so everyone should hear about and plan to be a part of moving these values forward. If during an interview, however, the candidate identifies in some way their interests in a diversity-related subject, you can speak about the subject and perhaps also make it possible for them to speak to someone else in your organization who shares a similar identity or life experience. It is great to offer a promising candidate the opportunity to meet such a person and it can make a difference in their employment decisions. Make sure you follow up quickly with talented candidates from one-down groups and demonstrate your sincere interest so they know you care about them.