

Interview Tips

written by Rory Lodge | February 21, 2014



We are often asked what are the best way to conduct an interview.

Statistics show that depending on where you are in Canada, and depending on the position you are looking to fill, it can take anywhere from 30-250 days to fill a position with a candidate. Obviously, making sure you are hiring the right person is very important, and background checks, good job descriptions, strong onboarding procedures and much more can and will impact whether or not you hire the right person.

However, asking the right interview questions in the right way is probably the most important way to get a good indicator of whether or not a prospect is the right fit.

The following is taken from the HRS of Brigham Young University.

Each member of the interviewing panel should review these guidelines as well as the Americans with Disability Act.

Interviewing and Questioning Techniques

In making the transition from small talk to the interview proper, the first question asked should be open and not difficult to answer. For example: "Please tell us about your experience and training as it relates to this position".

Interviews should flow more like a conversation, not an interrogation. To achieve this, comments and spontaneous conversation about relevant topics are encouraged; however, if the candidate self-discloses information that would have been inappropriate to obtain, further probing or documentation of the information should not occur.

Interview Objectives

David Cherrington in *The Management of Human Resources* gives 4 purposes of interviews:

- To obtain information about the applicant.
- To sell the organization.
- To provide information about the organization.
- To establish friendship.

80/20 Rule

The job of the interview committee is to ask questions and listen for predictive information from candidates. Candidates should do approximately 80% of the talking, interviewers 20%.

Silences

Interviewers do not need to be overly concerned about silences. Sometimes candidates will fill in a silence with important additional information; however, the situation should not be allowed to turn awkward.

Follow Up Questions

Probing or follow up questions will encourage further conversation. These questions can elicit useful information beyond rehearsed responses. Basic example: "Can you provide more detail on that?" or "Then what did you do?"

Consistency in Questioning

Generally, all candidates should be asked the same series of questions. It is much easier to compare candidates if everyone is measured against the same criteria.

Inviting Questions

Candidates should be invited to ask questions. The committee's answers will assist candidates in evaluating their "fit" for the job. The quality and quantity of questions asked by candidates also provides useful information to the interview committee.

Scheduling Considerations

- Determine the length of time for each interview.
- Hold the interviews relatively close together to provide a better comparison of the candidates.
- The interview room or location should be free from interruptions.

Informing the Candidates

- Day, time and location of the interview.
- Directions and parking instructions.
- Approximate time to allot from arriving on campus to departure.
- What he or she can expect in the interview.

Setting the Stage

- Interviews should be free of interruptions (no phone calls, visitors, etc.).
- Interviewers should not be late to the meeting or act rushed.
- A warm greeting and suitable introductions should be made.

- “Small talk” at the beginning of the interview can be made; however, interviewers need to be cautious to avoid small talk that could lead to inappropriate questions.
- Candidates should be informed as to what will occur in the interview.
- The position should be explained, including working hours and any special schedules (required to work weekends, swing shift, etc.).

Be Aware of the Candidates

- Give them a chance to sell themselves.
- Give yourself a chance to evaluate their qualifications.
- Stay neutral in the interview.
- Don’t be overly positive or optimistic.
- Explain how you will handle the selection process.
- The interview should be ended with a friendly, positive “Thank you.”
- Candidates should not be rejected until the entire process is completed and a candidate has accepted an offer.

Respect for the candidate and his/her personal information should be exercised. The following shows what is considered lawful or unlawful to discuss in an interview.

Topic	Lawful	Potentially Unlawful
Sex	Must be a bona fide job qualification or necessity. Distinctions based on gender are uncommon (e.g. issue attendant in locker room, actor or actress playing a part).	Employment decisions should not be based on gender, but on the ability to perform the job.
Marital & Family Status	Whether candidate can meet specified work schedules.	“Are you married, single, divorced, engaged etc.?” Number and age of children. Any questions or references to pregnancy.
Age	Inquiry as to minimum age requirements, by law, to work.	Inquiries regarding age, retirement, etc. The law protects individuals over the age of 40 from being discriminated against because of age.
Disability Accommodation	This question must be asked of each candidate: “After reviewing the essential job functions, are you able to perform them?”	Any pre-employment inquiry about the existence, nature, or severity of a disability.
Citizenship	“Are you authorized to work in Canada?” This question must be asked of each candidate.	“Of what country are you a citizen?” “Do your parents originate from the Canada?” “I see you were born in...”
Ancestry	Languages that the candidate reads and/or speaks fluently, if it is job related.	Inquiries into lineage, ancestry, native language, etc. How foreign language was acquired.
Race	None. (Race and ethnicity are now obtained via voluntary self-disclosure through Yjobs)	Discrimination should not occur on any basis related to the race of the candidate.

Convictions/Arrests	Whether the applicant has any actual convictions.	Any inquiries about arrests.
Credit Rating	None.	Inquiries about credit rating, charge accounts, etc.
Name	"Do you have work or school records under a different name?"	Inquiries which would indicate candidate's lineage, national origin, previous name of candidate where it has been changed by court order, marriage, etc.