

Guide: Interviewing

Interviews work better as mutual exchanges of information rather than inquisitions. Remember that you are selling your firm to the potential employee as much as they are selling themselves to you.

You need to find out whether the person would make a good addition to your team. They want to find out whether they would like to work with you.

It's important that any questions are not asked with the intention of discriminating on, say, the ground of marital or family status (see below).

You should consider attitude as well as skills. Skill can be enhanced, whereas attitude cannot easily be changed.

Involve relevant team members in the interview process. Their feedback is often useful.

Preparation

Review the CVs for the shortlisted applicants. Make sure you include any notes made during screening calls or conversations with the applicants. Be aware that notes you make and information you collect during any part of the recruitment process can be the subject of a Privacy Act request for information.

Schedule interviews, leaving time between each for discussion by the selection panel and short breaks so the interviewers are in no danger of becoming stale.

Put together a list of suitable questions. Use the Recruitment Interview form, an example based on interview questions for an Executive Assistant, as a starting point.

Arrange for a room to be set up so that interviewers and applicants can talk comfortably and in confidence. Diarise it and ask the team not to put through calls or interrupt interviews.

It sounds obvious but think about factors such as how the furniture is positioned. An applicant interviewed with the sun in their eyes for the duration of the interview will probably come across like a deer caught in the headlights. And they will probably feel like one. A round table format is more likely to put candidates at ease than the more common 'them and us' room layout.

Tips on conducting the interview

Engage in natural conversation with the candidates. This is important so you get a good feel for how they may or may not fit into the team. Minimise dry, question-and-answer routines, where most responses will be 'yes' or 'no'. Try to encourage expanding on a theme, either enlarging on the experience described in their CVs or what they have learned about the business during their visit.

Points to cover

Ensure you discuss:

- Brief history and mission of your company
- The position description
- Skills required
- The applicant's skills and experience, strengths and weaknesses
- The broad remuneration range
- The next steps (e.g. if they are successful in this interview, there will be skills checking, behavioural profiling and a second interview). It may be appropriate to obtain the applicant's consent to your obtaining a police check

Questions

These are suggested questions to cover the basics:

- Tell me about your last role
- What did you enjoy/dislike about the role?
- How would you describe your core competencies?
- Do you have any limitations or areas you'd like to improve on?
- Describe a difficult situation and how you handled it
- How do you handle conflict?
- What motivates you?
- What de-motivates you?
- Why do you want this job?
- What do you see as your biggest learning curve for this role?
- Describe your computer skills (for Word, PowerPoint, Excel, ranging from beginner through to advanced)
- What are your salary expectations for this role?

Do not ask

Do not ask questions which could be interpreted to discriminate against the applicant on any of the grounds set out in the Human Rights Act:

- Sex, pregnancy, and birth
- Marital status
- Religious beliefs (or lack of)
- Ethical beliefs
- Colour, race
- Ethnic or nationality origins
- Disability
- Age
- Political opinion
- Sexual orientation
- Employment status; being unemployed or being a recipient of the benefit
- Family status, including caregiving responsibilities or being in a relationship with, or a relative of, a particular person

Recruitment Interview form

[Position Title]

Structure the interview based on the requirements of the role.

.....

Give the candidate a brief history of the business.

.....

Interview Questions

Tell us a bit more about yourself and where you come from

.....

What circumstances bring you here today?

.....

Discuss hours of the position

.....

Based on your skills and experience can you describe your strengths by matching these to the functions of the role as outlined in our advertisement? Tell us which of these you do well, which are you ok with and which, if any, you see as being your weak points.

.....

This role requires [specify role requirement 1]. Can you give us an example of where you have needed to do this and how you managed to achieve this successfully?

.....

How do you feel about being the [specify role requirement 2]?

.....

This role will involve [specify role requirement 3]. What processes would you use to ensure that it all comes together and is completed when required?

.....

How do you think your colleagues perceive you?

.....

What are your short and long term goals?

.....

Discuss the salary expectation. What are your salary expectations? Our range is \$ [salary range]

.....

The [Position Title] role: Does this position still interest you?

.....

If successful, what notice period would you need to give? And when would you be available to start with us?

.....

Do you have any questions you would like to ask us about this position?

.....

Do we have up- to-date contact details for your referees?

.....

If you are shortlisted, the next steps from here are [outline next steps]. I would expect that we would contact you one way or another by [estimated date of contact].

.....

Thank you for coming in. It's been great to meet you.

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