

A Guide to the Interviewing Process

These guidelines have been prepared to help interviewers conduct fair and objective interviews. An interview should provide as much information as possible about an applicant's potential to perform the duties of a particular position. The most valuable interview is objective and permits the interviewer(s) to determine the knowledge, skills, and qualities of a prospective employee.

Interview Development

Determine Who Will Conduct the Interview

If feasible, use a team approach. The team approach is preferable because it saves time and allows for comparison of the applicant by the team members. The size of the interview team may vary, but generally two to three members are recommended.

Familiarize the Interviewer(s) with the Position

The interviewer(s) must be familiar with the major duties and responsibilities, and the essential knowledge, skills, and behaviors of the position. Be sure that each interviewer reviews the position description carefully.

Establish Criteria for Selection

The selection criteria must be consistent with the complexity and level of the job. Focus on performance factors that can be demonstrated in the selection procedure. Understand the departmental and organizational goals as they relate to this position. Such criteria must be job-related and might include performance during the interview, relevant training, education and experience, affirmative action goals, etc. Example: To what extent is job success dependent upon effective communication, on-the-spot reasoning skills, and the ability to effectively present oneself to others?

Develop Job-Related Questions

"Nice to know" questions are not permitted! Lawsuits may result from applicants who are rejected on the basis of irrelevant questions asked by interviewers.



It is not uncommon for an applicant to provide irrelevant or inappropriate information during the interview. Should this occur, disregard the information and do not write it down.

Develop Interviewing Strategies

There are many different interviewing strategies. Develop strategies that are appropriate for the position level and skill requirements. For example, interviews for a position that involves client contact should focus on verbal skills, while an analytical position requires more testing of critical thinking.

Establish a System to Evaluate the Responses

It might be beneficial to set up a formula for rating or ranking the applicant's responses to the questions based on the selection criteria. Evaluating the responses in this manner will help make the selection process easier and more objective.

Interview Suggestions

Preparing Questions

When developing questions, always keep in mind that they must be job-related and appropriate for the complexity and level of the position. It is helpful to weigh the questions based on the importance of each selection criterion. Below are six main categories of questions that are commonly used by interviewers. Different types of questions may be combined to obtain a certain response.

1. **Behavioral questions.** These questions are used to predict behavior. Past behaviors are the best indicators of future behavior.
2. **Close-ended questions.** These questions may sometimes be helpful when an interviewer wants to know certain information at the outset or needs to determine specific kinds of knowledge. Example: "Could you name the five specific applications involved in...?"
3. **Hypothetical questions.** Hypothetical situations based on specific job-related facts are presented to the applicant for solutions. Example: "What would you do if..", "How would you handle..."
4. **Open-ended questions.** These are the most effective questions, yield the greatest amount of information, and allow the applicant latitude in responding. Example: "What did you like about your last job?"
5. **Probing questions.** These questions allow the interviewer(s) to delve deeper for needed information. Example: "Why?", "What caused that to happen?", or "Under what circumstances did that occur?"
6. **Technical questions.** The most effective way to employ a technical question is to recall a real-life situation where two divergent approaches were both carefully considered.

Determining Strategies

Although there are many different interviewing strategies, the following are examples of three different perceptive strategies. These types of interviews lend to the perception of fairness among candidates and provide data to support decisions in the event of a challenge by a candidate.

1. **Behavioral interviewing.** The interviewer is looking for a behavioral pattern. All questions are based on the past. The assumption is that "past behaviors are the best indicator for future behaviors." The interviewer may get an idea of what action the interviewee might take in the future based on what happened in the past.

2. **Situational interviewing.** This strategy is based on the assumption that the closer you can get to a real work situation, the better the evaluation will be. The situational interview could involve taking a tour of the workplace and asking the interviewee to actually perform some aspect of the job, or a closely related aspect of the job.
3. **Structured Interviewing.** In a structured interview the same questions should be asked to all candidates. This type of interview improves reliability and validity by using the same job-related questions for each candidate. The strength of this type of interview is that all candidates receive the same treatment, interview questions are directly linked to job behaviors, and more than one person evaluates the candidate.

Each of these strategies has its strengths and weaknesses. One strategy should not be used exclusively for all interviews. Different position levels might require different interview approaches. The sensible approach is to take the best aspects of each style and combine them to produce a comprehensive strategy.

Evaluating Responses

As part of evaluating the responses, the interviewer(s) should review the job description to ensure thorough familiarity with the requirements, duties, and responsibilities of the position. Furthermore, the interviewer(s) should review the work history and relevant educational credentials of each candidate and consider the requirements of the job. Finally, the interviewer(s) should review the selection criteria, evaluate and rate the responses, and rank the applicants based on those criteria.

Interview Process

Pre-Interviewing

1. Schedule interviews to allow sufficient time for post-interview discussion regarding the completion of notes, etc.
2. Secure an interview setting that is free from interruptions or distractions.
3. Review applications and resumes provided by the applicants.
4. Provide an accurate position description to each applicant and allow adequate time for reading before the interview begins.
5. Provide the list of questions that will be asked during the interview to the applicant.

Opening the Interview

1. Introduce the candidate to each panel member.
2. Review the functions of the department or unit in which the position is located.

3. Allow the applicant an opportunity to pose questions or seek clarification concerning the position.
4. Explain the interview process to the applicant.

Questioning

1. Question the applicant following the method established in the developing stage.
2. Be consistent with all applicants.
3. Allow the applicant sufficient time to respond to each question.
4. Follow up on questions that were not clearly answered.
5. Record all information elicited from the question.

Closing the Interview

1. Inform the applicant when the decision will be made and how notification will occur.
2. Confirm the date of the applicant's availability to begin work.
3. Confirm the applicant's correct address and telephone number.
4. Give the applicant a final opportunity to raise any questions.
5. Obtain all necessary information from the applicant about references. There should be a minimum of 2-3 references who have reviewed the applicant's work.

Post-Interview

1. Review the selection criteria.
2. Review and complete notes.
3. Decide what components of the answer are relevant to the question and should be included in the rating of the applicant.
4. Avoid prejudice and comparison of applicants between interviews.
5. Use the selection criteria established in the developing stages.
6. Rank the applicants based on the selection criteria and document information relevant to the interview.
7. Don't mistake charm for competence.
8. Check a minimum of 2-3 references who have reviewed the applicant's work.
9. When possible, decide upon a second and third choice in the event the first choice should decline the offer.
10. Document the basis for the final recommendation.
11. Notify all applicants interviewed of the results prior to announcing the selection.
12. Establish expected outcomes using the same required and flexible competencies that were identified for the position during the recruitment and selection process.