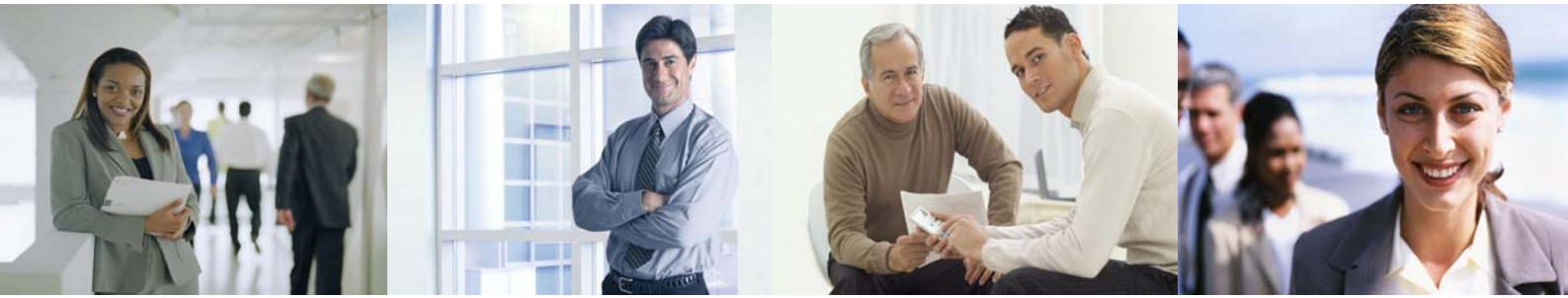


Conducting Interviews



Provide the right environment

An interview situation can be difficult for all parties at the best of times, because essentially it's placing strangers into an intimate environment, and creating a forced exchange. You can ease some of the pressure by ensuring that the interview takes place in well-lit airy surroundings. Make sure there are no distractions, and that both you and the other parties will be physically as comfortable as possible - If the air conditioning/heating is broken, postpone the interview!

First impressions count

Remember that this is a two-way interview, this is your chance to increase your company's human capital and in turn wealth, so you want the best person for the job. If the candidate feels uncomfortable in the interview, what impression is that giving of your company? Stick to timeframes - don't keep candidates waiting longer than is necessary - it will increase their nerves which may mask a great performer.

The right location

- Make sure the space is not too small, or too intimidating
- Ensure the temperature is not too hot or cold
- Choose somewhere with an appropriate noise level

The right atmosphere

Cut out potential distractions - if there is a telephone there divert it, switch mobiles off, and make sure other personnel knows there is an interview taking place and won't disturb you.

Communicate with body language

Smile often to encourage an open safe environment, and make regular eye contact. Use friendly, open body language - for example don't sit with your arms crossed in front of you (which translates to 'I don't like you'). Nod encouragement whilst they are answering questions.

Be prepared

Create a list of questions/discussion points and allow adequate time for the candidate's answers, and the candidate's questions. Have a copy of the job description and their resume to hand to refer to. You may also wish to have an organisational chart and/or company profile to hand to show candidates and/or to answer questions relating to the company structure. You should also ensure there is a supply of fresh drinking water and glasses.

Control the interview

Keep your list of points/questions to discuss/ask in front of you and stick to it. If the candidate is talking too much, or going off the subject, gently interrupt and get them back on track. On the other hand, if the candidate isn't very forthcoming with answers, try rephrasing questions or clarify points, and encourage them with body language (see above).

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Some Standard Interview Questions:

1. Describe your current/most recent role.
2. Describe what you like most/least about your current job.
3. Describe your current company's technology.
4. Why are you leaving your current role?
5. What attributes make you a suitable match for this role?
6. Describe your work style/management style.
7. Describe the type of company you'd most like to work for.
8. Describe the ideal role you'd play in that company - how has your expertise prepared for that role?
9. Where do you see yourself in 5 years time?
10. Who has been the biggest influence on your career?
11. What motivates you?
12. How do you evaluate your own performance?
13. What accomplishments are you most proud of? What skills aided you in achieving these?
14. List some obstacles you've encountered. How did you overcome these?
15. Describe your strengths.
16. What is your greatest weakness? What have you done to overcome this?
17. What do you consider your biggest professional failure? What did you learn from that experience?

Specific role related and KPI questions

Use the job description and Key Performance Indicators for the role (KPIs). You will have already chosen to interview this candidate because presumably their resume has highlighted their suitability for the role. Choose the most important KPIs and ask the candidate to give examples of similar KPIs in their current or previous roles. For example in a call centre role, a KPI may be taking x number of calls per hour. Ask the candidate to give an example where they have achieved or exceeded similar targets. If the role is delivery focussed, can the candidate prove they have delivered to at least the required level in past positions?

Behavioural Questions

Pinpoint key behavioural domains (KBD's) that you feel are necessary for an employee to succeed in a role, bearing in mind the prospective team as well the environment in general. KBD's are behavioural traits such as tolerance, patience, enthusiasm, leadership, change, decisiveness, analysis, planning and organisation, initiative, persuasiveness, for example. Choose questions to ask that require a candidate to describe past experiences that illustrate these behavioural traits, for example:

- Behaviour: Judgement
Question to ask: 'Tell me about a good/bad decision you have made. What went into making that decision? How do you feel about it now?'



Conducting Interviews

- Behaviour: Decisiveness
Question to ask: 'Which decisions do you tend to make rapidly, and which do you take more time over? Give an example in each case'

This type of question is designed to help predict future behaviour. The examples given do not have to be work related. They should still give you some insight into whether the candidate will fit into your organisation/team. A young, energetic, and fast paced web design company will need employees with very different key behavioural traits to a highly conservative, traditional corporate financial institution.

Presentation and Communication

If communication and presentation skills are a high priority for potential employees then you can use their performance in the interview as a guide to their skills in these areas. What better test for a cold-call salesperson than to have to sell themselves in interview? If this is a customer/client-facing role, does the candidate present himself or herself in the way you wish your company to be presented?

Have they done their homework?

Ask the candidate what they have learnt/know about your organisation - if a prospective candidate really is interested in working for you they will have done their research. Why do they want to join your organisation? Do they know of your company history? This should help you weed out the ones who simply found your ad on the web and sent off their CV on spec.

Candidate Questions

A well prepared candidate will have questions for you regarding the role and your organisation. Some potential questions you may want to think about:

- Is this a newly created position?
- Who will I be reporting to? What is their background?
- What kind of training and professional development do you offer?
- What criteria do you use to measure success?
- How do you reward success?
- How do you evaluate employee's performance?
- What opportunities are there for advancement?
- Are there any other employee ancillary benefits?
- Does the company have plans for expansion or reduction?

A successful conclusion

The goal is not, as some interviewers think, to try and 'catch out' the candidate or trick them. You are merely trying to ascertain who will be the best person for the role, by both skills and experience and personality. The candidate likewise is judging you as a potential boss. The employee will only succeed in the role if they are both a strong technical and cultural fit. Making sure the interview is as stress free as possible will make it easier for both parties to ascertain the potential fit, and therefore make the right decision.

