

A Few Words on Interviewing...

Don't underestimate the importance of interviewing carefully and selecting only the right candidate for the specific job opening.

Picking the right person will lead to a better team, and so as time goes on and more good hiring decisions are made, the quality of the team continues to increase. Good hires stay longer, allowing you to get further and re-train or start over less frequently. Each member of the work group contributes to the corporate culture for better or for worse.

Great interviewing skills don't necessarily come naturally, but the following concepts can help.

Behavioral Interviewing

Behavioral Interviewing is an extremely useful technique. Think carefully about what competencies you are looking for in a candidate. Then formulate discussion points that will elicit stories from the candidates which will allow you to see their reactions to related work situations. Questions should begin with phrases such as "Tell me about a time when..." or "Describe a situation in which you..." Guide the candidate into telling you a story. The stories should reflect a depth or lack of depth in the competency you are asking them about. Avoid calling out the competency directly, though; you want the candidate to clearly demonstrate that he has (or lacks) the skill without leading them to the answer they think you want to hear.

You'll probably need to rely on follow-up questions to get the candidate to tell full stories.

Why did you make that choice?

How did it turn out?

What would you do differently next time?

What did you learn from that?

How did you accomplish it?

From the stories, you can decide if the candidate has depth in the competencies that are most relevant to the position.

Starting the Interview

When the candidate first comes in, you want to make him or her feel comfortable. You will elicit more honest information if the candidate is relaxed. Greeting the candidate with a smile can go a long way. Always remember that even the chit-chat in the hallway is part of the interview.

In a first interview, you should first explain about the company, then about the job. It's also helpful to go over the training process, the structure of the department and the atmosphere. If you are conducting a second interview, you can skip the explanation of the company, but please speak briefly about the job and the department. Be careful not to telegraph the correct answers to the candidate. Be sure you aren't tipping your hand or you won't get honest answers! Tell them about the job duties, not about the qualities he'll need to succeed.

Next, you should ask the candidate about their work history.

Reviewing the resume and evaluating Interviewee answers

This is where the resume or application comes in. Have it available on your computer screen or hard copy on your desk before you collect the candidate from the lobby. Review the candidate's work history and, if applicable, their education by asking them questions. It's a good idea to take notes on the back of the question sheet.

Everyone exaggerates; the problem is, they exaggerate to different degrees. Look at the stories they tell you, not the adjectives they describe themselves with. Focus on their skills and competencies; experience is only an indicator of such. Past actions show how a candidate may behave in the future.

Once the candidate answers the main part of the question, dig deeper. His simply telling you he is a hard worker doesn't mean nearly as much as his showing you via an experience story. Why did the candidate make the choices he did?

Listening actively is very important! What is the candidate really saying? Pay attention to the themes in his stories – to his tone & body language. Does he appear professional? Has he made good decisions in the past? Is he excited about this type of work?

Probing Deeper

Always ask meaningful, open-ended questions; avoid "cultural-noise" and leading questions.

Don't be afraid of silence; allow the candidate to think.

Always follow up the question until you get the whole story – the point is to see if the candidate has (or doesn't have) the competency you are probing for. (Change the subject or interrupt if he or she is just babbling and not giving you useful info)

How did it turn out?

What would you do differently next time?

What allowed you to succeed where others didn't?

What did you learn from that?

Listen to what the candidate is really saying – look for underlying themes.

Examples:

Question: How do you feel about Overtime?

Rephrase As: Can you tell me about a time you worked really hard on a project for work?

Question: Do you like typing?

Rephrase As: What made you choose this line of work originally?

Or: What about Data Entry do you like the most?

Question: Do you have a good attendance record?

Rephrase As: What keeps you motivated at work?

Selling the candidate on the job

Please don't forget that making the job look attractive is very important. In order to have an excellent selection of candidates to choose from, it is vital that the interview team sells the candidates on the job.

Describe the positive aspects of the position and of the company.

Be accurate, and give them the negatives, too, but don't dwell on them.

Allow the candidate to ask as many questions as they come up with.

Be excited about the job.

Show pride in the company.

No one wants to work for a dead fish – be personable.

Concluding the Interview

When wrapping the interview up, make sure you tell the candidate what the steps in the interview process are. Usually, skills testing will follow, then discussion about who will be invited back for second interview.

Never make a commitment you are not certain will follow. Do not be too specific about dates. And never make a job offer in the interview.

If you know that there will be no plans to move forward with the candidate, tell him or her that we will discuss our candidates in the next few days and get back to them. Be vague. The recruiter can then follow up with a polite letter.

Here's a phrase that is always good to go back to:

"The interview team will discuss our candidates over the next few days and we'll get back to you if we plan to move forward"

Thank the candidate for their time, and walk them out.

Making the decision

It is important to discuss the interview after it is complete, and while the details are still fresh in your mind. Supervisors should discuss with the hiring manager or their Director in detail. In some cases, formal Consensus meetings will be held. But other times, like in the case of routine positions where we are looking for more than one person, consensus meetings may be very informal.

When making a decision about the candidate, focus on their skill set, attitude, professionalism, and overall qualifications. Try to envision them doing the work. Discuss things that bothered you about the candidate as well as things that excited you.

Making an Offer

The Hiring Manager will make the verbal offer to the candidate via telephone once the consensus meeting has been held. The hiring manager should always touch base with HR first (background check, straggling candidates, etc).

A good standard phrase for making an offer:

"We would love to have you join us!"

Sound excited! Tell the candidate "Welcome Aboard" or "Congratulations"

Make sure you get a "yes" or other clear response.

Always state that the offer is contingent upon receipt of a clear background check and drug screen.

Schedule the new hire for their first day and Orientation

Notify HR of candidate's acceptance (or decline) as soon as you know.

Your Notes

Notes are a good way to remind yourself of what you discussed. They should be balanced to the interview – write what the candidate says (paraphrase) rather than lots of opinions. Always be very politically correct.