

Hiring: The All Important Interview Process



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In past articles, I discussed creating an overall hiring process and how to write a great job posting. Now it is time to talk about the interview process, which is one of the most important tools your organization or business has when hiring. How many times have you had a candidate that looked incredible on paper turn out to be a dud during the interview process? Read on to find out about questions you can ask that will point you to the right candidates for the positions you are trying to fill.

Have a level playing field

It would be unfair to give one candidate a bunch more time than another to explain the qualifications. So, set a time limit for each interview and stick closely to it. However, don't put a stopwatch on the table that just makes things unnecessarily awkward. Create a comfortable interview environment for all the candidates. You want people to be at ease at first when they are being interviewed so that they feel comfortable opening up to you when they answer questions.

Prepare ahead of time

Have specific questions planned for each interview ahead of time. If you are using a panel to interview candidates, assign each question to a specific person so that the interview flows smoothly. Often, interview questions end up a lot like bad job postings. The questions are too easy to anticipate, such as "Tell me about a time you faced a challenge and how you overcame it." Whenever you have questions that are anticipated by the candidate, you are going to get "canned" responses that do not give you very much insight into

what the candidate is really like.

Ask good questions

Ask questions that will give you clues about the candidate's ability to perform well at the job you are hiring for. Don't ask leading questions; instead try to keep questions neutral so that you can find out how the candidate honestly feels, not how they think you want them to feel. For example, if you ask, "Would you be able to start at 7 a.m. every day and work weekends sometimes?", of course the candidate is going to say "yes". Then once they have the job, they will start complaining about the hours. Instead, try asking, "What would your ideal work schedule look like?" While the answer they give may not match your hours exactly, you will get insight into the candidate's work ethic, and whether they researched your organization.

Another good question that may have nothing to do with the job you are filling is, "Give me a synopsis of a recent book you read and why you did or didn't like it." While reading may not be a core skill that is needed for your position, a candidate's answer to this question will tell you a lot about their desire to self-improve, and general intelligence level.

Pause and pay attention

While you are working within a timeframe, don't jump to the next question whenever there is a lull in the candidate's response. Take a second and pause before starting the next question. Often this pause will spur the candidate to keep talking and expand on what they have already said. This will give you further insight into the candidate's level of preparedness. Make it a habit to add this silent pause before asking more questions. You will be surprised how candidates fill the space you create.

Questions for the interviewers

At the close of each interview, leave some time to ask each candidate if they have any questions they would like to address to you. If they do not have any questions, they did not prepare. No matter how thoroughly a candidate scoured your website, there will always be unanswered questions. A well-prepared candidate will have at least two or three questions for the interviewers.