
Quick Guide to... Interviewing

Good interviewing skills are an essential tool to ensure that the right people are recruited into the right jobs. Recruitment costs money and time, whether it is successful or not but the hidden costs of ineffective recruitment are formidable in terms of team and individual morale.

Many interviewers rely mainly on intuition as a basis for recruitment and whilst 'gut feeling' can be valuable, a structured interview with good questioning has a much higher rate of success in selecting the most appropriate candidate.

This quick guide provides some tips to assist you before, during and after the selection interview.

How should I prepare for the interview?

- Review the candidates CVs/application form thoroughly prior to the interview. This will allow the questioning to be more relevant, direct and concise. It also sends a poor message if it is obvious during the interview that you have not prepared sufficiently
- Decide how the interview will be structured – will you be using hypothetical, competency based or behavioural based questions? Identify what you want from the interview and prepare some questions in advance to act as a guide
- Have a copy of the job description to hand – you can use this as a reference tool to prompt your questioning and a reminder of the key skills you are seeking
- Prepare an interview scoring sheet onto which you can also make comments against each of the key criteria required
- Ensure that your meeting will not be disturbed - advise your administrator where you are and what time you will be available. Advise reception that you are expecting a candidate for interview to create a good first impression when the candidate arrives
- Check the interviewing room before the candidate arrives to check the temperature, clear up any mess and check what beverages you are able to offer

What should I consider during the interview?

- Confirm the likely length and format of the interview with the candidate – control the interview to ensure that the timings stick
 - Ask questions designed to focus on behaviours in addition to skills and knowledge – this gives an indication as to how the candidate will approach certain situations
 - Vary the interview questions to include open and closed questions. Try to link questions together so that the candidate is able to expand their answer and provide as much evidence as possible of their competency
 - Do not be afraid of silence as this can be a positive way of eliciting a response. Silence will often encourage the candidate to expand on their answers which may allow the interviewer to probe further. However, be careful as too long a period of silence can create tension
 - Ensure there is sufficient time for the candidate to ask questions towards the end – the interviewer should have sufficient information about the job and the working environment to answer any questions posed
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- Ask creative questions – designed to challenge the candidate and gain an insight into their thinking. Avoid obscure questions bearing no relation to the job role
- Be informal but professional – individuals respond to a relaxed conversational style of interviewing, remember that the candidate is also making an assessment of the company

What should I do following the interview?

- Write up interview notes as soon as possible – it's much easier than leaving the task until the end of the day. Particularly if you are seeing several candidates in one day
 - If you are interviewing with another person (or with a panel), ensure that all interviewers hand in their notes on each candidate and the documentation is kept in one location. There may be cause to refer to these notes in the future
 - Refer to the job description and person profile to compare/contrast the candidate's abilities against the core requirements
 - It is often helpful to categorise the candidates into a strong/maybe/no list. If there are low number of strong candidates, revisit the maybe list for try not to pressurise yourself to make a decision based on the current selection.
 - Attach the interview notes to the completed scoring sheet – if the candidates is subsequently hired this document should sit in their personnel file, if they are rejected the interview notes still need to be kept so ensure that notes are legible and of good quality.
 - Whether a candidate is successful or not in your selection process, it is important that feedback is available to the candidate. Applicants should always be given the opportunity to get feedback from the company, this will not only benefit the candidate but will also ensure that the company is protected from any tribunal claims.
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