



Author

Interviewing Job Applicants

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Introduction

The job interview is the crucial point to employment where potential employees can succeed in convincing prospective employers that they are indeed the ideal candidate for the position. Companies are making an investment in the potential of the employee and how they will fit into the existing employee structure. Managers are often called upon to interview job candidates who will potentially become their subordinates. Therefore interviews are a two-way process in which interviewers evaluate applicants and applicants also evaluate interviewers.

Objectives:

- Understand why the interview is a critical decision
- Procedures to follow prior to the interview.
- Steps in preparing for the interview
- Conducting yourself during the interview

Importance of the Interview

The human resources department or an identified person may be responsible for screening candidates to verify the information on their resumes. Once that is done, qualified candidates are generally passed along to the manager of the department or unit in which they'll work. As a department manager or supervisor, it's likely you'll be working very closely with the job candidate you hire. That's one reason it's so important that you're very thorough in your interview. Another reason is that your decision is an indication of your ability to manager. A good or bad choice will reflect on you. Your new hire will interact not only with you, but with your boss, your colleagues, your staff, and your customers. You'll be responsible for making sure the candidate:

- Can do the job well
- Fits in well with other members of the department or unit
- Will be able to work well with you and other members of the team

Most managers hire for skills, but fire for character. Because of the overwhelming problems associated with hiring employees who lack required character traits, more and more managers are asking character-discerning questions when interviewing employees. Legal penalties for negligent hiring are also propelling character-based hiring policies.

Preparing For the Interview

Before interviewing job applicants think of specific actions that are required from employees in the position (refer to position description) and then think of the root character trait of the action. You will also want to take some time to review each job candidate's resume and/or application. Then create or select questions and scenarios to discern if the candidate regularly practices the trait and the action. The enclosed list of questions for interviewing employees isn't flawless, but managers consistently report it's quite effective. This enclosed list is quite large! Browse the list to see which questions best fit your company and position. Nevertheless, this list of employee interview questions is very useful starting point.

Steps in preparing to interview

Step 1 -- Prepare. Prior to the interview make sure you understand the key elements of the job. Develop a simple outline that covers the job duties. Possibly work with the incumbent or people familiar with the various responsibilities to understand what the job is about. Screen the resumes and applications to gain information for the interview. Standardize and prepare the questions you will ask each applicant.

Step 2 -- Purpose. Skilled and talented people have more choices and job opportunities to choose from. The interviewer forms the applicant's first impression of the company. Not only are you trying to determine the best applicant, but you also have to convince the applicant this is the best place for them to work.

Step 3 -- Performance. Identify the knowledge, attributes, and skills the applicant needs for success. If the job requires special education, certification, or licensing, be sure to include it on your list. Identify the top attributes or competencies the job requires and structure the interview accordingly. Some of these attributes might include:

- What authority the person has to discipline, hire, and/or fire others and establish performance objectives
- What financial responsibility, authority, and control the person has
- What decision-making authority the person has
- How this person is held accountable for performance objectives for their team, business unit, or organization
- The consequences they are responsible for when mistakes are made

Step 4 -- People Skills. The hardest to determine, as well as the most important part of the process, is identifying the people skills a person brings to the job. Each applicant wears a "mask." A good interviewing and selecting process discovers who is behind that mask and determines if a match exists between the individual and the job. By understanding the applicant's personality style, values, and motivations, you are guaranteed to improve your hiring and selecting process.

Pre-employment profiles are an important aspect of the hiring process for a growing number of employers. By using behavioral assessments and personality profiles organizations can quickly know how the person will interact with their coworkers, customers, and direct reports. They provide an accurate analysis of an applicant's behaviors and attitudes, otherwise left to subjective judgment.

Step 5 -- Process. The best interview follows a structured process. This doesn't mean the entire process is inflexible without spontaneity. What it means is, each applicant is asked the same questions and is scored with a consistent rating process. A structured approach helps avoid bias and gives all applicants a fair chance. The best way to accomplish this is by using both behavioral based questions and situational questions.

- **Behavior Based Questions** - Behavioral based questions help to evaluate the applicant's past behavior, judgment, and initiative.
- **Situational Based Questions** - Situational based questions evaluate the applicant's judgment, ability, and knowledge. The interviewer first gives the applicant a hypothetical situation.

Conducting Yourself in the Interview

How you conduct yourself on the interview is as important as how the interviewee conducts him or herself. You should try to put the interviewee at ease since that will help insure that you get more honest answers. However, you shouldn't give the impression that you are relaxed type of manager if you aren't one. Don't forget — it's as much about the potential employee deciding if this place is right for him or her as it is about you deciding if the candidate is right for the job. If this isn't a good match, from either party's perspective, it's best to find out now. It's very important to be polite and considerate. Keeping the candidate waiting, or taking phone calls in the middle of an interview reflects poorly on you and your company. This person you are interviewing may some day work for you, or, in this fast moving world, you may someday work for him or her.

The bottom line with the interview is to determine:

- Can the applicant do the job?
- Will the applicant do the job?
- How does the applicant compare with others who are being considered for the job?

The following forms are provided as examples of what you might want to use prior, during and after the interview process. There are also interview questions below.

Interview Log

Position Title:

Total Number of Applicants:

Date Job Description Developed/Revised:

Referral Sources:

Date:	Source:	Candidate	Comments:
7/7/07	Advertisement in Newspaper	John Pork	Applicant has strong swine background

Candidate Evaluation Form 1

Applicant Name: _____

Interviewer: _____

Position Interviewing For: _____

Interviewer's Position: _____

Department: _____

Interview Date: _____

Instructions: Evaluate the job candidate's interview performance in relation to the essential functions of the position. Check the box that more closely indicates the candidate's performance.

Education/Training	Excellent	Proficient	Unsatisfactory	Not Applicable
Comments:				
Experience	Excellent	Proficient	Unsatisfactory	Not Applicable
Comments:				
Job/Industry Knowledge	Excellent	Proficient	Unsatisfactory	Not Applicable
Comments:				
Communication Skills	Excellent	Proficient	Unsatisfactory	Not Applicable
Comments:				
Initiative	Excellent	Proficient	Unsatisfactory	Not Applicable
Comments:				

Overall Impression:

- Strong candidate
- Possible candidate
- Better suited for _____
- Do not pursue further

Comments:

Candidate Evaluation Form 2

Applicant Name: _____

Interviewer: _____

Position Interviewing For: _____

Interviewer's Position: _____

Department: _____

Interview Date: _____

Instructions:

1. In the first column, list position requirements.
2. In the next column, weight the importance of those requirements from 1 to 10.
3. In the next column, rate the candidate against the requirement on a scale of 1 to 5 (where 5 is the best rating and 1 is the lowest).
4. Multiply the weight by the rating and put the score in the fourth column.

Requirements	Weight	Candidate's Rating	Candidate's Scoring
Management Skills			
Technical Skills			
Certification			
<i>(Add Requirements as needed)</i>			
TOTAL			

Reference Skills

Candidate: _____

Previous Employer: _____

Position Held: _____

Contact: _____

Employment Dates: _____

Contact's Position: _____

Salary: _____

Contact's Phone: _____

Your relationship to the candidate:

Nature of work:

Performance of responsibilities:

Attention to detail:

Management of company policies and procedures:

Recognition of and solving of problems:

Creativity:

Deadline oriented:

Reliability:

Improvements:

Personality:

Integrity:

Promotability:

Leadership abilities:

Delegation of responsibility:

Acceptance by peers:

Results compared with peers:

Interface with upper management:

Reason for leaving:

If policy permitted, would you re-employ:

Overall rating, 1-10:

Possible Job Interview Questions

1. How would you describe yourself?
2. What specific goals, including those related to your occupation, have you established for your life?
3. How has your experience prepared you for a career?
4. What specific goals have you established for your career?
5. How do you determine or evaluate success? Give me an example of one of your successful accomplishments.
6. What has been your most rewarding accomplishment?
7. If you could do so, how would you plan your career differently?
8. Are you more energized by working with data or by collaborating with other individuals?
9. How would you describe yourself in terms of your ability to work as a member of a team?
10. What motivates you to put forth your greatest effort?
11. Given the investment our company will make in hiring and training you, can you give us a reason to hire you?
12. Would you describe yourself as goal-driven?
13. Describe what you've accomplished toward reaching a recent goal for yourself.
14. What do you expect to be doing in five years?
15. What do you see yourself doing in ten years?
16. How would you evaluate your ability to deal with conflict?
17. Have you ever had difficulty with a supervisor or instructor? How did you resolve the conflict?
18. Tell me about a major problem you recently handled. Were you successful in resolving it?
19. Would you say that you can easily deal with high-pressure situations?
20. What quality or attribute do you feel will most contribute to your career success?
21. What personal weakness has caused you the greatest difficulty in school or on the job?
22. If you could change or improve anything about your education, what would it be?
23. Which education or training classes or subjects did you like best? Why?
24. Describe the type of teacher that created the most beneficial learning experience for you.
25. What plans do you have for continued education or training?
26. Before you can make a productive contribution to the company, what degree of training do you feel you will require?
27. Describe the characteristics of a successful manager.
28. Why did you decide to seek this position?
29. Tell me what you know about our company.
30. Why did you decide to seek a position in this company?
31. Why do you think you might like to live in the community in which our company is located?
32. Would it be a problem for you to relocate?
33. To what extent would you be willing to travel for the job?
34. Which is more important to you, the job itself or your salary?
35. What level of compensation would it take to make you happy?
36. Tell me about the salary range you're seeking.
37. Describe a situation in which you were able to use persuasion to successfully convince someone to see things your way?
38. Describe an instance when you had to think on your feet to remove yourself from a difficult situation.
39. Give me a specific example of a time when you used good judgment and logic in solving a problem.
40. By providing examples, convince me that you can adapt to a wide variety of people, situations and environments.
41. Describe a time when you were faced with problems or stresses that tested your coping skills.
42. Give an example of a time in which you had to be relatively quick in coming to a decision.
43. Describe a time when you had to use your written communication skills to get an important point across
44. Give me a specific occasion in which you conformed to a policy with which you did not agree.
45. Give me an example of an important goal which you had set in the past and tell me about your success in reaching it.
46. Tell me about a time when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty in order to get a job done.

47. Give me an example of a time when you were able to successfully communicate with another person even when that individual may not have personally liked you (or vice versa).
48. Sometimes it's easy to get in "over your head." Describe a situation where you had to request help or assistance on a project or assignment.
49. Describe a situation where others you were working with on a project disagreed with your ideas. What did you do?
50. Describe a situation in which you found that your results were not up to your expectations. What happened? What action did you take?
51. Tell of a time when you worked with a colleague who was not completing his or her share of the work. Who, if anyone, did you tell or talk to about it? Did the manager take any steps to correct your colleague? Did you agree or disagree with the manager's actions?
52. Describe a situation in which you had to arrive at a compromise or guide others to a compromise.
53. What steps do you follow to study a problem before making a decision.
54. We can sometimes identify a small problem and fix it before it becomes a major problem. Give an example(s) of how you have done this.
55. In a supervisory or group leader role, have you ever had to discipline or counsel an employee or group member? What was the nature of the discipline? What steps did you take? How did that make you feel? How did you prepare yourself?
56. Recall a time from your work experience when your manager or supervisor was unavailable and a problem arose. What was the nature of the problem? How did you handle that situation? How did that make you feel?
57. Recall a time when you were assigned what you considered to be a complex project. Specifically, what steps did you take to prepare for and finish the project? Were you happy with the outcome? What one step would you have done differently if given the chance?
58. What was the most complex assignment you have had? What was your role?
59. Tell of some situations in which you have had to adjust quickly to changes over which you had no control. What was the impact of the change on you?
60. Compare and contrast the times when you did work which was above the standard with times your work was below the standard.
61. Describe some times when you were not very satisfied or pleased with your performance. What did you do about it?
62. How have you differed from your supervisors in evaluating your performance? How did you handle the situation?
63. Give examples of your experiences in a job that were satisfying. Give examples of your experiences that were dissatisfying.
64. What kind of supervisor do you work best for? Provide examples.
65. Describe some projects or ideas (not necessarily your own) that were implemented, or carried out successfully primarily because of your efforts.
66. Describe a situation that required a number of things to be done at the same time. How did you handle it? What was the result?
67. Have you found any ways to make a job easier or more rewarding or to make yourself more effective?
68. How do you determine priorities in scheduling your time? Give examples.
69. Tell of a time when your active listening skills really paid off for you - maybe a time when other people missed the key idea being expressed.
70. Give an example of when you had to work with someone who was difficult to get along with. Why was this person difficult? How did you handle that person?
71. Describe a situation where you found yourself dealing with someone who didn't like you. How did you handle it?
72. Give me a specific example of something you did that helped build enthusiasm in others.
73. Tell me about a difficult situation when it was desirable for you to keep a positive attitude. What did you do?
74. Give me an example of a time you had to make an important decision. How did you make the decision? How does it affect you today?
75. Give me an example of a time you had to persuade other people to take action. Were you successful?
76. Tell me about a time when you had to deal with a difficult person. How did you handle the situation?

77. Tell me about a time you had to handle multiple responsibilities. How did you organize the work you needed to do?
78. Tell me about a time when you had to make a decision, but didn't have all the information you needed.
79. What suggestions do you have for our organization?
80. What is the most significant contribution you made to the company during a previous job?
81. What is the biggest mistake you've made?
82. Give me a specific example of a time when a co-worker criticized your work in front of others. How did you respond? How has that event shaped the way you communicate with others?
83. Give me a specific example of a time when you sold your supervisor on an idea or concept. How did you proceed? What was the result?
84. Describe the system you use for keeping track of multiple projects. How do you track your progress so that you can meet deadlines? How do you stay focused?
85. Tell me about a time when you came up with an innovative solution to a challenge your company/ organization was facing. What was the challenge? What role did others play?
86. Describe a specific problem you solved for your employer. How did you approach the problem? What role did others play? What was the outcome?
87. Describe a time when you got co-workers who dislike each other to work together. How did you accomplish this? What was the outcome?
88. Tell me about a time when you failed to meet a deadline. What things did you fail to do? What were the repercussions? What did you learn?
89. Describe a time when you put your needs aside to help a co-worker understand a task. How did you assist him or her? What was the result?
90. Why do you wish to leave your current employer?
91. What could your current employer do to convince you not to leave?
92. How do you think your present supervisor would describe you?
93. If you were asked to perform a task that was not in your job description, how would you respond?
94. How do you feel about being "on call"?
95. Is there anything else I should know about your qualifications that would help me to make a hiring decision?

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