



25 TIPS TO MAKE YOUR INTERVIEW PROCESS MORE EFFECTIVE

Every hiring decision you make is a critical business decision. You will be entrusting the new hire with your customers, your finances, and/or your business reputation. Effective interviewing techniques can help ensure that you select the right candidate for your business. Below are 25 tips for interviewers.

Process Planning

- 1) *Define Success Criteria* – Before you talk to the first candidate, make sure you have a clear understanding of what skills and knowledge are necessary for success. For example, does the position require negotiation skills or in-depth knowledge of a specific type of technology?
- 2) *Identify the Interview Team* – Will you be the only interviewer or will others be involved? The interviewers should include everyone who needs to have a voice in the hiring decision. Make sure the interview team has the expertise to assess candidate skills and knowledge in all critical areas.
- 3) *Plan Interview Questions* – The most effective interviews are structured and include prepared questions that interviewers will ask of all candidates. Avoid asking opinion questions (e.g., “What do you think is the best way to . . .”) during the interview. Instead, focus on questions about:
 - Specific examples of when the candidate has applied critical skills (e.g., “Describe a time when you needed to . . .”)
 - Required knowledge areas (e.g., “Tell me about the types of software/ equipment/ technology/ other area that you have used.” What training have you received in the area of . . . ?” “What certifications related to . . . do you have?”)
 - Work environment (e.g., “What type of work environment have you been most successful in?” “What type of management style works best for you?”)

Before the Interview

- 4) *Screen Resumes* – Screen resumes to assess the preliminary match with your pre-defined success criteria (see Tip 1). Some hiring managers make the mistake of assuming that more years of experience will automatically translate to greater expertise and stronger performance. While this is sometimes the case, tenure is no guarantee of the breadth of knowledge and skill.
- 5) *Review Each Interviewee’s Resume Prior to the Interview* – Review individual resumes closely to identify any areas that require clarification (e.g., gaps in experience, whether degrees were completed, levels of responsibility).





- 6) *Schedule Focused Time* – Make sure that your schedule is clear for the interview time and that you will not be interrupted.

- 7) *Set Up the Interview Space* – Try to conduct your interview in space away from ringing phones and other interruptions. Make sure that both you and the candidate will have comfortable chairs, that the candidates will not have the sun shining in their eyes, and provide the candidate with water or coffee.

During the Interview

- 8) *Establish Rapport* – Establish rapport by opening with small talk. Candidates who are relaxed and comfortable will do a better job of providing you with the information you are looking for.

- 9) *But, Avoid Getting Too Personal* – You can establish rapport by talking about neutral topics such as the weather, traffic, whether the candidate had any difficulty finding the office. However, avoid topics that can lead to information (e.g., marital status, family situation) that should not be considered as part of the hiring decision.

- 10) *Explain the Process* – Tell candidates what they can expect such as how long the interview will be, that you will be looking for specific examples, and with whom they will be speaking.

- 11) *Let the Candidate Do the Talking* – Most interviewers make the mistake of doing most of the talking during an interview. When this happens, the interviewer misses the chance to learn about the candidate which is the goal of the interview. Make sure the candidate does most (about 80%) of the talking during the interview.

- 12) *Assess Both "Can" and "Will"* – While it is critical to assess the candidate's skills and knowledge ("Can the candidate do the job?"), you also need to determine whether the candidate is a fit for the specific position in your company ("Will the candidate come to work every day, work hard, and stay with the company?").

- 13) *Use Open-Ended Questions* – You will learn much more about the candidate by asking open ended questions such as "Tell me about a time when you . . ." instead of closed or yes/no questions such as "Have you ever . . .?"

- 14) *Rephrase Candidate Responses* – Use rephrasing to clarify the candidate's response. This technique is also useful for helping to control the interview.

- 15) *Ask One Question at a Time* – Asking two questions at once usually means that you will only get an answer to one of your questions.





- 16) *Push for Specifics* – Some candidates have been interviewed many times by interviews who only wanted superficial answers. As a result, your candidates may need you to remind them that you want to hear about specific examples rather than how they usually or might handle a situation.
- 17) *Be Positive* – Avoid giving the impression that you think the candidate has given you either a poor or a good response. If your reaction is visibly negative, the candidate may shut down and fail to give you all the information you need.
- 18) *But, Not Too Positive* – If a candidate gives you an example of a great accomplishment, it is fine to say something like, “That must have been very rewarding” or “I can see why you are proud of that accomplishment.” However, don’t be so effusive that the candidate thinks that he or she has won the job before you have gathered the information you need.
- 19) *Use Body Language to Control the Interview* – Leaning forward to show your interest can encourage a quieter candidate to talk more. Leaning back or looking at your watch can signal an overly talkative interviewee to get to the point more quickly.
- 20) *Avoid Legal Pitfalls* – Keep your questions focused on job-relevant information. Avoid asking questions that can reveal information that should not be part of your hiring decision such as age, marital status, number of children, religion, and political affiliation.
- 21) *Take Notes* – Take notes of candidate responses to your questions. It’s hard to keep track of everything a candidate says over the course of an hour long interview. It’s even harder to keep track of who said what when you interview multiple candidates.
- 22) *But, Document Only Job-Relevant Information* – Although you will only ask job-relevant questions (see Tips 3 and 20), sometimes candidates reveal person information. Do not record this information. Remember, your notes could become a discoverable document if you were sued about your hiring decision.

After the Interview

- 23) *Evaluate Candidates Against the Job First, then Against Each Other* – Evaluate your candidates against the standards you identified when you were planning your process. If more than one candidate meets your standards, then select the best of the qualified candidates. Comparing candidates against each other first could lead you to select the best of a group of unqualified candidates.





24) *Provide Feedback* – Let candidates know as soon as possible if they are still being considered.

Throughout

25) *Throughout: Treat Candidates as You Would Want to be Treated* – Your candidates may someday also be your customers. Treat everyone with fairness and respect throughout the hiring process.

