

Tips for Conducting Interviews

The following tips are based on human rights legislation and recruitment best practices.

Establishing Brand

Interviews, as with the whole recruitment process, are a great way to increase brand awareness by 'selling' the organization to candidates. All candidates will form an opinion of the organization based on their interactions and experiences, therefore, interviews play a huge role in portraying what kind of organization you are and what your values are. It is important to be authentic in your interview style, and to think about what tone you want to set. Be aware that all candidates will tell others about their experiences whether they are successful or not.

Validity of Assessment

It is important that interviews and other selection assessments are valid for that particular job. Validity measures whether the selection method appropriately, meaningfully and usefully measures the competency, knowledge or skill desired in the candidate.

Validity is increased by including multiple selection methods (resume screen, phone interview, panel interview, reference checks) and by including multiple team members in the process. Different perspectives will help reduce discrimination and ensure the final selection is objective.

Valid interview questions relate back to duties and expectations of the position as outlined in the job description and position posting. They should be relevant to the requirements of the role and not cover information that is not necessary. Typically, questions can be broken down into categories including introduction, skills and experience, working with people, problem solving, values and culture and administration. When asking questions designed to assess cultural fit within the organization or team, make sure they are based on objective values and not on personal preference.

Human Rights Legislation

It is illegal to ask interviews questions relating to:

- Race
- Ethnic Origin
- Colour
- Age
- Sex (including pregnancy or childbirth)
- Marital Status or Family Status
- Mental or Physical Disability
- Pardoned Convictions
- Sexual Orientation

To reduce discrimination, the same core questions should be asked of all candidates. For example, it is illegal to ask only candidates with children whether they can work overtime, or only women if they can lift a certain weight.

Biases Influencing the Assessment of Candidates

The following biases are concepts to be aware of while interviewing. It is important to explore 'gut feelings' to see if they are an example of one of the following tendencies.

1. **Contrast/Context Bias** - Where the candidate is only assessed in the context or in comparison with other candidates, rather than against the requirements for the job. One average candidate could be considered excellent when compared against poor candidates
2. **Halo/Horn Effect** - When one particular trait is used to develop an overly positive or overly negative impression of the candidate. For example, if a candidate has nice hair or you don't like what they're wearing, this may influence your overall opinion of them to extent where you may be unwilling to listen for cues that go against your views.
3. **First Impression Bias** - When a candidate creates a favourable first impression and you view the rest of the interview through a positive lens
4. **Negative Emphasis Bias** - Where the interviewer is more influenced by unfavourable than favourable information
5. **Central Tendency** - When the interviewer has a tendency to rate all candidates as average and does not differentiate enough
6. **Similar-to-Me Bias** - When the interviewer is biased towards individuals who share similarities e.g. education, work, experiential, ethnic background
7. **Attribution Bias** - Where an attribute or competency is incorrectly attributed to a candidate based on an answer e.g. a candidate who enjoys playing chess is thought to be a strategic planner
8. **Stereotyping** - Whereby the interviewer has preconceived notions or beliefs about individuals from a certain social, economic or religious group
9. **Candidate Order Bias** - When the order of interviews affects the interviewer's objectivity towards candidates

Establishing Expectations

It is important to establish accurate expectations about a job, and not to 'sell' the job to meet the perceived needs or desires of the candidate. Misrepresentation of a job or company can result in an unsatisfied employee who may be unproductive or leave soon after starting. In addition, it can lead to legal liability related to wrongful hire.

Reference Checks

The final stage of a recruitment process is conducting reference checks. This stage should not be skipped. If an incident occurs, organizations can be held liable if they did not use due diligence to review an employee's application.

Written permission should be gained from the employee before references are contacted. A Reference Authorization Form should be completed during the panel interview.