Ruth Seddon HR

Interviewing Guidance

Shortlisting

Preparation is the key to maximising the likelihood of selecting the most suitable candidate for the position.

1. Identify specific job-related criteria/competencies, using the job description.
2. Match these criteria with those detailed in the candidate's CV/application.
3. Use this information to select which candidates will be invited for interview.
4. Inform those who fail to meet the grade, unless you want to keep a few in reserve.

Be aware of disability issues such as dyslexia or similar – it is unwise to disregard someone for poor spelling, for example, unless the ability to write well is an essential component of the job role, for example a marketing copywriter.

You should not ask someone to state if they have a disability or not (this could lead to a discrimination claim), but if an applicant does disclose a disability, you may need to adjust the recruitment process to remove any disadvantage they may have. Do get advice if this happens though before making any adjustments.

You should also consider whether the applicant could submit a portfolio of work or carry out some kind of practical work as part of the interview process – this can test if their skills are to the level you require and in accordance with what is stated on their CV. If you intend to do a test, you should let them know in advance so that if the applicant foresees an issue with a disability, they can discuss it with you.

Interview Preparation

Normally, recruitment interviews will be arranged and conducted by the recruiting person/manager. It is advisable wherever possible to ask someone else to interview with you. Interviewing with a colleague can be useful to give you time to collect your thoughts or plan further questions while your colleague 'takes the reins' for a while. You can also study the candidate's body language and facial expressions more easily when not directly involved in talking to the candidate. A second opinion is often useful in making recruitment decisions.

First interviews (if you consider more than one interview is required) can be done by video, but candidates often perform differently in face to face meetings so in person interviews are often better.

Review the CV/application form, identify any areas that need further exploration or clarification. For example, where it is not obvious from the candidate's CV that they possess the required skills or experience.

Identify any other areas on the CV that need further exploration or clarification. Look particularly for unexplained gaps in employment, a succession of rapid job changes, or a statement of achievement that needs to be validated.

Formulate the questions to be covered in the interview using the competency-based interview questions below.

For a simple, low level job, 30 minutes is likely to be adequate, more time needed for higher level jobs but don't go past one hour or they and you will be exhausted.

Ensure there will be no interruptions during the interview and arrange the seating to minimize unintentional distractions; glass offices for example, are not ideal so consider sightlines. You may want to ask people not to walk past the office while you are interviewing and put up signs.

If you are asking people to give a presentation, tell them the equipment/software available in advance and give them some time to get set up.

Conducting the Interview

When conducting the interview:

- Introduce everyone, explain the structure of the interview and that they can ask questions at the end – they will want to know more about the Company.
- Use the same questioning strategy with each candidate and do not ask for any personal information or views that are not relevant to the job, as this could be considered discriminatory.
- Do not accept partial or unclear answers to any of your questions, probe for more detail if necessary.
- Give every candidate an opportunity to answer the questions fully.
- Try to keep question open, not questions which require a simple yes / no answer.
- Remember – the candidate should be talking for 80% of the interview and the interviewer(s) for 20%.

Things to consider:

- Academic & professional qualifications
- Technical knowledge & competence relevant to the job
- Commercial & business awareness
- Communication skills

Key Tips:

- Don't have more than two people interviewing or in the room – it is intimidating and also gives the candidate difficulty with focusing their attention
- Some people struggle with the formality of interviews, especially if there is a desk/table between them and the interviewer(s), so consider the arrangement of the space to make the experience more relaxed – relaxed applicants perform better
- Try to focus on the skills/knowledge they demonstrate, not how they look or react. In particular, some people find eye contact very difficult or uncomfortable to maintain and

there are very good psychological and disability reasons why they might struggle with this
- Try to remove extraneous noise or visual distractions to allow both yourself and the applicant to focus. A room full of marketing posters/stands or general clutter may be very distracting.
- Don't make assumptions! Selection should be based on facts, not impressions.

Suggested Questions

Review their background and current role:

- relevant positions on CV/application form, especially last two years' experience
- current role, structure of a typical day/week?
- main responsibilities
- most significant achievements
- why planning to leave?
- last two years of experience
- kinds of problems dealt with / decisions made in course of employment?
- major responsibilities?

Competency Based Questions

Ask 2 to 3 questions under each competency which has been identified on the Job Description.

Some example questions:

- what would you do if...? (give them a scenario which is realistic for the job role, this tests their problem solving)
- tell me about a time when...? (another specific question about what they would do but here you are also seeing if they have the experience you require)
- tell me how you would do this... (an open question which allows them to talk without interruption about how they would carry out a task)
- What would you consider to be your technical strengths and weaknesses?
- What experience have you had in performing/managing/arranging...?
- Can you give me an example of when you had to persuade someone of something which you felt they would not like? How did you go about it? (Look for a process and awareness of others.)
- Can you give me an example of gaining agreement for ideas or actions? How did you do it?
- Tell us about how you have handled a dissatisfied customer in the past.
- What are some of the ways to measure customer/user satisfaction?

- What does "customer service" mean to you?
- What steps can be taken to ensure quality in any operation?
- Have you ever tried to do a task differently or introduced a new approach? Tell me about it?
- Describe a situation where you had to solve a complex problem? How did you do it?
- Can you think of a situation when you did not find the solution to a problem? What were the circumstances and what did you do?
- What was the last difficult decision you had to take? Was there a time constraint? How did you decide the timescale?
- Tell me about a time when you had to communicate a difficult decision? Who did you have to tell? How did you do it?
- Tell me about a development need you have identified in yourself and how you addressed it.
- Can you give me an example of seeking opinions and feelings from others?
- What is your strongest leadership skill and how will it assist you for this job?
- Tell me how you have monitored progress of a group of a group or individual task.
- How do you maintain an effective working relationship with immediate work colleagues? Can you give me an example?
- Tell us about a situation in which you were required to work with people at various levels within your organisation? What was the most important step that you took to work effectively with these people?
- What qualities do you have that make you an effective team player?
- Tell me about a time when you have had to act on your own initiative and how you handled the situation. Did you have any authority issues to overcome and how did you handle these?
- Can you give me an example of when you have demonstrated ability to forward plan and schedule events for yourself or others?

Domestic Questions

Ask what is the candidate's current salary, what salary are they looking for?

Ask what is the candidate's notice period?

Is there anything the candidate wants to ask?

Finish by telling the candidate what will happen next. Thank the candidate and close the interview.

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After the Interview

Read through your notes about each candidate. Your reasons for appointing or nor appointing a particular candidate are important in case your final decision is challenged.

Compare each candidate against the job description again in light of the additional information you now have concerning each candidate. Is the candidate a good fit against the job description in the short/long term?

Make an assessment for each candidate as to whether they will fit the culture of the team and the Company as a whole. However, ensure that you are not discriminating against any candidate because he/she is a different sex or of a different age or from a different racial, religious or cultural background to the rest of the team.

Do not pick the best of a bad bunch – recruitment mistakes are costly and time consuming and ultimately it is better to re-advertise to get the right person.

If you are uneasy or unsure about anything that was discussed in the interview, ask the candidate back for another interview or talk to the candidate over the phone to clarify. Do not ignore your instincts and offer the job anyway.

Let all candidates know whether they are successful or not as quickly as possible but not the same day to avoid allegations that you have not taken enough time to make a decision. Delays could mean that you miss out on the best candidates.

Record your decisions (make sure these have been reached without indication of bias) and retain any notes you may during interview, ideally for 12 months from the date of interview.