

PDH Course P161

Interviewing Effectively:
How to Select the People
You Really Need

-3 PDH-



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Course Overview

For many people, making a successful hiring selection is a lot like describing their taste in art:

"I'm not sure how to describe it but I'll know it when I see it!"



Think back to the last time you interviewed an applicant. You had the best of intentions and wanted to ask the right questions to discover information about their background, experience, skills, and abilities.

But, if you are like many others without interview training, you may have found yourself doing more talking than listening rather than learning about his or her strengths and weaknesses. Perhaps the interview got off track and you found it difficult to get back into focus. And, if someone would have asked for your opinion of the applicant at the end of it, would you have been able to refer to specific skills or just your overall impression?

And, as for the person you finally selected, you probably based your decision more on instinct than specific information. Also, if you were asked why you **didn't select** someone else, would you have been able to defend your choice objectively so as not to show discrimination?

If you're disappointed with the results of this kind of hit-or-miss approach to interviewing applicants, then it is time to approach it with a more systematic and objective method. This course will help you develop:

- ✓ A process of analyzing the open position that will allow you to determine what types of skills and qualities you require in an applicant to ensure later success on the job.
- ✓ An effective plan for the interview that allows you to engage in friendly (and informative) chatting without losing the thread of your questions or letting the session slip out of your control.

Poor Choices and the Cost of Turnover

Finding new or replacing lost employees is very expensive for any organization. This course teaches skills that can reduce this cost by helping you improve your interviewing results through more consistency and relevance to your interview questions. *A more standardized approach to questions means the answers you get will help you distinguish between applicants more easily and be more confident about your final selection.*



The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) estimates that the cost of turnover is typically 30% of an employee's **total** annual salary expense when you factor in the cost of recruitment, lost productivity, possible overtime for others in making up that person's work, possible impact on customers, morale of fellow employees, etc. Here is how to figure the cost of turnover in your organization.

1. Take the annual salary for the position you are trying to fill \$ _____
2. Add the wage cost of benefits, taxes, and anything else the employer provides such as uniforms, parking fees, etc. as a percentage of salary. Usually from 28% - 35% depending on the organization \$ _____
3. Take 30% of that amount as the cost of turnover.

For example, let's use a position that pays \$24,000 a year and the company's added wage costs are 35%.

Take the annual salary for the position you are trying to fill. = **\$40,000**

1. Add the cost of benefits, taxes, and anything else the employer provides such as uniforms, parking fees, etc. as a percentage of salary. (We will use 35% here.) $\$40,000 \times 35\% = \$14,000$ $\$40,000 + \$14,000 = \$54,000$
2. Take 30% of that amount as the cost of turnover. $\$54,000 \times 30\% = \$16,200$. The cost of losing that \$40,000 employee is estimated to be **\$16,200**.

Additional costs include fees for outside recruiters (if you use them) and possible overtime for employees having to cover for this open position.

Obviously, we must improve our interviewing skills to get better 'fits' for open positions so we can reduce our costs of turnover.

Preparing for the Interview

Many times, interviewers make the mistake of focusing on the technical skills relevant to the position *instead of the behavioral skills necessary for the successful application of the technical skills.*

For example, if an IT manager were asked, “*What skills and abilities are you looking for in the person who fills this programmer’s position?*” they may look at you as if you had lost your mind and reply, “*The ability to write code, of course!*” Their interview questions would probably deal primarily with the technical skills of writing code.



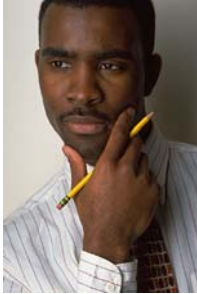
Technical Skills or Behavioral Skills

However, the position of a programmer *within the organizational network* probably involves many critical **behaviors and abilities** that are not just about the technical skills of writing code such as:

- The ability to multi-task (it is rare that someone with technical skills will only work on a single project to completion without interruption by unexpected ‘fires to put out’ or changing priorities from management)
- The ability to ask questions and listen effectively (Are the desired outcomes the client is expecting actually what they will get given the existing resources and environment?)
- The ability to meet milestones and deadlines

- The ability to work within a team effectively (Programming is rarely a project for one person. Typically, several programmers work together on segments of a project and they must be able to get along with each other.)
- The ability to know when to ask questions or escalate issues. (Unexpected issues will frequently surface and the programmer must know when to ask for clarification on priorities or escalate issues upward.)
- The ability to act as a consultant for the client. (The programmer may have insight into techniques or solutions that will provide what the client wants but has not asked for. The skilled programmer should point those options out to the client and allow them to make a choice.)
- The ability to work alone without close supervision.
- The ability to develop a relationship of trust and confidence within the business unit for which we are developing this application (Perhaps this programming position supports a critical business unit and the primary client within that BU must feel confident that the programmer can deliver what they need for the product to succeed.)

A Better Approach to Interviews



The smart manager will start by *looking at the behaviors required by the position* to develop relevant interview questions and not be limited to asking technical questions about the skill only.

The easiest way to do this is to start with a blank sheet of paper and consider the 20% of the position behaviors that account for 80% of the job that are not job-specific technical skills.

Note: If you have difficulty deciding which behaviors you desire, try looking at it from an “inverse viewpoint”. In other words, what behaviors could cause **problems**? You may identify traits like these:

1. Frequently misses deadlines
2. Can't get along with team members
3. The clients don't feel comfortable with him or her on their project
4. Spends more time doing rework than creating new code

Therefore, you have determined that *meeting deadlines, working well with team members, work well with clients, and is careful when writing code to reduce the amount of rework* are desirable behaviors!

We will use the list we developed earlier starting on page 5 to continue this example:

1. *The ability to multi-task*
2. *The ability to ask questions and listen effectively*
3. *The ability to meet milestones and deadlines*
4. *The ability to work within a team effectively*
5. *The ability to know when to ask questions or escalate issues.*
6. *The ability to act as a consultant for the client.*
7. *The ability to work alone without close supervision.*
8. *The ability to develop a relationship of trust and confidence with the client*

It is easy to see how developing a list like this helps the manager (interviewer) begin to develop behavioral priorities for the position and stay focused during the interview.

It is essential that an interviewer develop a printed list of questions that are asked of each applicant for a common position to ensure:



- ✓ Each applicant has a fair opportunity for the position by facing the same questions asked of all other applicants
- ✓ The interviewer has a consistency among the interviews that will help him or her narrow the selection choices based on the different answers to the same questions
- ✓ The interviewer can provide documented evidence of consistency among the interviews for the position and that questions asked were relevant to the position in question.

Identifying Specific Requirements

Now that the hiring manager has considered the essential behaviors associated with this particular position, he or she can begin to develop more fully the **minimal** position requirements by considering what the successful candidate:

- Must **have**
- Must **be**
- Must **know**



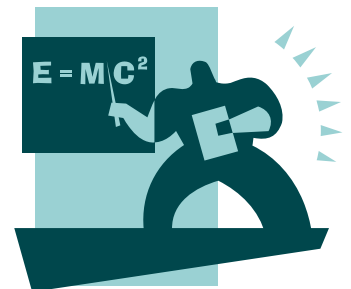
Then, as a way to determine “tie breakers” in case of two or more applicants meeting the minimums listed as “must have, must be, or must know”, the manager can list the “*would like to have*”, “*would like to be*”, “*would like to know*” characteristics that would describe the perfect candidate.



WARNING!

Be sure that your “*would like*” characteristics are clearly *bona fide occupational qualifications* (BFOQs) so you do not get into potential trouble regarding discrimination issues.

For example, if you *would like* an ideal IT programming candidate to have experience in training so they could teach the application to others if the opportunity comes up, that is clearly related to the programming position and would be safe to consider.



However, if you say *it would be nice if they were single because they may have to travel frequently*, you are asking for trouble because their marital status has absolutely nothing to do with the job. The manager could get into trouble if an applicant who was not selected complained that the manager thought his or her being married would prevent traveling if needed. The key here would be for the manager to say in the interview, “The job requires approximately 25% (or whatever is appropriate) overnight travel away from home. Would that be a hardship for you?” **and let the applicant decide whether it is a hardship.**



Interview Clues



Successful interviewers pay attention to more than just the answers they receive to their questions; they also look for clues during the interview to help them discover “the real applicant”.

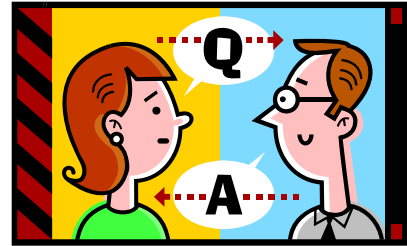
Useful clues to look for include:

- ✓ **How well the applicant listens and responds directly to your questions.** Do they expand and elaborate or just use a minimum of words? (Neither is necessarily better than the other. Just think how well this personality will mesh with the work team as well as the job.)
- ✓ **Whether you feel the applicant hears the real need or the question behind the question.** (Do they grasp the nuances and subtleties of the question?)
- ✓ **Whether the applicant probes you for clarification or more information** (Are they really inquisitive and thoughtful about the position to see if they think they would be a good fit or just trying to get through the interview with as little risk as possible?)
- ✓ **How well they turn potentially negative information into positives.** (Sometimes asking a simple question like, “*In what areas would people who have worked with you say you could use some professional development?*” or “*Tell me about a mistake and what you learned from it.*” These questions assume that no one is perfect and we all could stand to be a little better at what we do. If your applicant is reluctant to mention any, it may mean:
 - They see it as a weakness they want to hide
 - They really don’t think they have any flaws.

Obviously, either answer should be a warning to you.

- ✓ **How well they relax and build rapport with you.** (Their ability to talk comfortably may have a bearing on how well they will interact with clients or coworkers.)

- ✓ **How the applicant handles the non-verbal part of the communication.** Notice especially eye contact, body posture, and tone of voice. It should feel comfortable — that is, the applicant should look at you, sit in a relaxed (allowing for some nervous energy) and alert posture, and speak distinctly. You should not feel "over" or "underwhelmed" by the applicant. Notice whether the applicant is sensitive to your enthusiasm, pauses, and energy level; and if he/she fits into the "feeling" of your work environment.



- ✓ **How you feel after the interview.** Do you feel enthused? Tired? Impressed? Friendly? Indifferent? Perhaps those who may work with the applicant will feel the same way.
- ✓ **How much do they know about your organization and the position?** Did they show some initiative to find out something about you, too, or are they just passive and uninformed looking for a job?
- ✓ **The language the applicant uses.** Sophisticated? Simple? Practical? Appropriate for the setting? Try to name drop or dazzle you with non-relevant information? Was there more "sizzle than steak"?
- ✓ **What kind of questions did they ask?** Did they sound rehearsed or robotic? Were there thoughtful questions about responsibility, authority, job expectations, or your management style? Did they ask about professional development opportunities for them?



Were the questions prepared or spontaneous? Applicants who have prepared written questions show organizational skills and assertiveness. *Notice also which questions the applicant asks first, because these are his/her primary concerns.*



When applicants ask questions, it's very important that you find out what's behind their questions. Never assume you know why they are asking a particular question.

To learn the most, ask questions that clarify the reasons a question is being asked. If, for example, an applicant asks,

"How much responsibility will I have to develop my own projects?" You might respond, "Is that important to you?" If the answer is "yes," ask "why?"

Or, *"How much latitude will I have in making decisions?"* You could reply by saying, *"That's a good question; why do you ask?"* As always, your best approach is to probe.

For example, if the applicant answers, *"Oh, I was just wondering,"* you might respond, *"What sort of latitude do you feel is necessary to get the job done right?"*

Although it may not necessarily be a bad sign when applicants ask no questions, you should keep an eye out for individuals who seem reluctant to inquire specifically about the position you have open. *Particularly in sales, where you need employees who can persuade others and acquire information easily, a lack of assertiveness and curiosity can be a danger signal.*

Establishing Rapport with the Applicant

Greet them with a smile and lead him or her to a quiet, private place for the interview. Some interviewers make "small talk" at this stage easily and naturally. Perhaps the best way to begin a conversation is to prepare for it before the interview. Find a few things on the applicant's resume or application that you would find easy to discuss.



Examples might include:

- Where they went to school or any organizations to which they belong
- The type of industry or business with which they have been employed
- The geographical areas in which they have been living or working
- Job duties or responsibilities that caught your eye

For instance, you might say, *"I noticed on your application you've been working in the financial industry...haven't new construction loans been booming in that part of the area?"* Or, *"I was impressed to see that you speak Russian. How did you pick up that skill?"*

CAUTION: *Beware of creating a "halo effect" that makes them seem better than their qualifications deserve.*

There are three advantages to this approach to for establishing rapport:

1. Applicants will be put at ease the sooner they begin discussing their own background.
2. The interview begins quicker and you have a chance to find out more about your applicant earlier in the interview.
3. They will be pleased that you remembered something about them, and therefore will be more likely to trust you. This increases your chances of getting revealing, honest answers.

Starting the Interview

After the "small talk," it's time for you to be in charge. You can control the interview if you set the agenda before it really gets rolling.

For a first interview, you should explain what will happen. This alerts the applicant that you know where you are going and that you will be the leader. A simple agenda you can set is:



- **"First, I'd like to ask you some questions so I can learn about you"** (and warn them you'll be taking some notes).
- **"Then, I'll tell you more about the job."** (When you are telling them about the job, remember to get your answers first so that you don't "telegraph" your job requirements. For a full discussion of this, see "Do Not Do This" beginning on page 15.)
- **"Then, you can ask me anything you like."** (Saying this helps a lot when applicants interrupt the interview with questions. You should be in control; if they interrupt too much, simply repeat your request that the applicant hold his or her questions.)



- **"Finally, we'll discuss what will happen next."**
(This is the point in the interview at which you can sell them on the job and wrap up details for future contacts. See "Concluding the Interview.")

If you announce this agenda before you plunge in, your chances of remaining in charge and conducting an efficient interview will go up substantially. Remember:

- ✓ "I'll Ask"
- ✓ "I'll Tell"
- ✓ "You Ask"
- ✓ "We'll Discuss"

Do Not Do This

Here are some things to keep in mind that you **DO NOT DO** during your interviews:

- ✓ **Don't Talk Too Much.** Try to talk 20% of the time and listen 80%. Keep your side of the conversation brief. If the applicant asks you a lot of questions early in the interview, **beware!**

They made have read an interviewing books that teaches interviewees on techniques to get you talking because *the more you talk, the more you'll like the applicant*. They are acting like you're the most interesting person in the world and hoping you'll like that and think they are smart for realizing it!



If you find yourself talking too much in the interview, ask the applicant to hold his or her questions until the end of the interview. Ask short, clear questions, then LISTEN, ask follow-up questions and listen some more.

- ✓ **Don't Tell Them Much About Your Needs.**

Inexperienced interviewers often make the mistake of beginning the interview by describing the open position in detail, including the requirements for the person who will fill it.

Certainly, the applicant deserves to know the essential responsibilities or job description of the position for which he/she is applying. However, the more you tell them what you want, the more they will tell you they have it.



For example, if you tell them, *"We need a person in this position who is a self-starter, can work independently and documents well what they have done"*, what skills do you think they will tell you they have?

In other words, applicants will always **"tell you what you tell them to tell you."** So be very careful that you do not coach them into telling you what you want to hear.

- ✓ **Don't Withhold Approval Or Create Stress.** Be sure to avoid disapproving glances, frowns, sounds, or gestures that can only create stress in the applicant. This may cause them to focus more on not upsetting you than giving you relevant information.



The best stance to take is to listen actively and "stroke" the applicant's sense of self-esteem. Sincerely compliment the activities and accomplishments they are proud of. Downplay the mistakes or negative experiences they reveal. In this way, applicants will feel more comfortable with you and are more likely to relax and provide truthful answers to your questions.

"Stress" interviews only prove one thing: whether the applicant can handle a stressful, manipulative interview. *Unless the applicant's job will be to work under similar stressful conditions, do not safely infer that his or her reactions to such an interview shed much light on the ability to handle stress on the job.*



On the other hand, if you can create a stressful situation very similar to one likely to be encountered on the job, the applicant's reaction should be a very valid piece of evidence.

- ✓ **Don't Do It All Yourself.** Get in the habit of having at least one other person meet, and if possible, interview the finalists. Then compare your reactions and how you rated their ability to fill the position requirements.



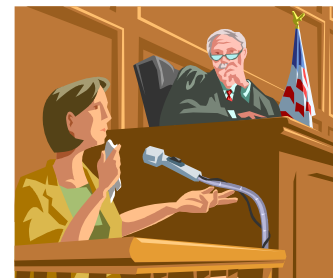
Even experienced interviewers miss vital information or get misled by personal biases; the best check against this is to compare your conclusions with someone else's. If you find a wide variance among the conclusions, consider whether another interview might prove worthwhile.



For complex technical or professional positions, you might assign a few requirements to each of three or four interviewers. For example, one interviewer might concentrate on the applicant's technical background and knowledge base. Another would ask questions about his or her work habits, creativity, and organizational skills, and a third would explore the candidate's communication abilities and ability to work with others. This process

works best when you have trusted interviewers who are particularly knowledgeable in their assigned areas.

- ✓ **Don't Be Too Quick To Judge.** Restrain the natural tendency to jump to conclusions early in the interview. Something that sounds "dumb" may only be something you don't understand; always paraphrase and summarize the applicant's key points aloud to make sure you really understand. When you are sure of something, write a quick note (a word, phrase, or abbreviation is fine) to remind yourself. However, try to hear another answer corroborating your first conclusion. The way to accomplish this, of course, is to ask follow-up questions.



- ✓ **Try to focus on what's right – not wrong – with them.** This means that you should try to find out how he or she could make you a profit or provide better service or efficiency. What may seem like a huge "negative" in the first ten minutes of an interview may not seem so negative after you identify an exciting "positive" or two.

Some applicants start out "cold" — nervous energy or fear may inhibit their natural friendliness. Try not to be impatient. Give each applicant a real shot at the job before you begin glancing at your watch or rushing through your questions. Once you act impatient, applicants will resent you and the tension level will rise in you both.

- ✓ **Don't Try To Remember Everything.** You will forget approximately 80% of the details of the interview within an hour of its conclusion. Therefore, you must write notes either during the interview or immediately after. If you take notes during the interview, here are two tips:



- First, tell the applicants at the beginning of the interview that you will take a few notes. You might explain it by saying, "I've got a terrible memory and it'll help me remember you better later."

This simple courtesy should help reduce suspicion and nervousness when you take notes. However, if you write too many notes it will disrupt the flow of conversation essential to a successful interview. Instead, write occasional, short, unobtrusive notes and fill in the details later.

- Second, don't be obvious about what you are writing. For instance, if an applicant says, *"I guess my worst fault is coming in late too often,"* don't be too quick to write it down. If you write it down immediately, he or she will realize how damaging the remark was and will edit future remarks. Instead, ask another question (an easy question is best) and as the applicant is answering, nod and write a simple remark such as "late." With this method, you will not inhibit the applicant nor influence the interview by your note taking.

Some Warning Signs

Before the interview, take a few minutes to "red flag" the resume or job application.

1. COPY THE APPLICATION. *Never write on an original application or resume; your comments, "squiggles," highlighting, etc. could be used against you in legal proceedings if the application material were subpoenaed.*



2. Then, circle on their resume anything which seems overly general, vague or suspicious. Note also misspellings, gaps in information such as dates or job duties and blanks left empty on the application form.

Some common red flags include:

- ✓ "Rounded off" dates; for example "1989," rather than September, 1989.
- ✓ Non-specific educational information. Did the applicant "attend" a certain college or "graduate" from the college? Did he/she study "general business" or "accounting and bookkeeping"? (Note: you are entirely justified in asking for a school transcript to validate education. Ask the applicant to furnish it; many schools will release transcripts only to the ex-student.)
- ✓ Reasons for leaving past jobs. People don't leave jobs for "better opportunity elsewhere" — *they leave a position for specific reasons*. Find out what the job they left was lacking. Ask what they wanted in a manager or organization or what developmental opportunities were lacking. If the "reason for leaving" was "personal," circle it and ask the applicant to explain. You have every right to know.

- ✓ Lack of salary progression. Perhaps a good explanation will be forthcoming why an applicant did not receive raises regularly in his/her career. However, it's a "red flag" until you are satisfied that job performance incompetence wasn't the primary reason.
- ✓ Lack of progression in job duties or responsibilities. The best employees usually receive increased responsibilities if they stay in one position. If they change positions, their responsibilities typically increase as well. There may be exceptions to this—but you won't know the applicant's reason unless you ask.
- ✓ Gaps in employment history. Perhaps your applicant shows a year or two gap between jobs. Does this show a lack of initiative? Not necessarily. A woman may have taken time to have a baby. A man or woman may go back to school, travel, or work in a volunteer job. This "red flag" doesn't mean "no" — it means ASK and then judge. The "gap" may or may not be cause for concern.
- ✓ Overly vague/general job duties or job titles. For example, an applicant might write he or she "handled billings" as a job duty. Don't assume you know what that means; the "handling" could have been transporting the billing to someone else's desk! Similarly, are you sure you know what an "Administrative Assistant" does? Different organizations use this job title in very different ways, to describe duties ranging from secretarial to a mid-level management position.

After you have found the "red flags," you can use them at the beginning of the interview to clear up confusion and collect information quickly. The application can be your interview map — keep it visible during the conversation to keep you on track. You might want to start by asking a few questions about the least recent jobs first, asking more questions successively as you get to the more recent positions.

Concluding the Interview

It's important that you conclude the interview quickly, cleanly and politely. In addition, you'll want to do it when you are ready — whether it's after ten minutes or an hour and a half.

Here are some important steps in the process:

1. Make sure you've covered the entire list of requirements before you finish. Look again at the application or resume making sure you've asked questions about every job.
2. Be honest with yourself about whether you are really interested in the applicant. If you aren't, conclude the interview immediately. In any case, always finish with two questions:
3. *"I have no further questions. Do you have any questions about the job or our company?"*
4. *"Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about yourself which we haven't discussed?"*

Do not hesitate to “sell the company” here and give them a good reason (or two) why they should want to work there. Perhaps a few specific benefits such as tuition reimbursement, etc.

Then, thank the applicant for applying and explain your notification process, step-by-step. Include whether the candidate will hear the results of the interview by mail or a phone call, and within what period of time. If you do not want applicants to call you during this period, tell them.

Generally, it's a good idea not to tell applicants at the interview whether they will get the job. It will reduce your anxiety and the chances of legal trouble if you inform all applicants the same way -- after the interview. In addition, unless an applicant obviously does not meet a specific technical requirement, it's safest and kindest not to tell him/her at any time your reasons for not offering him/her the job. If you speak to him/her by phone, simply say, *"We chose another applicant who we feel is a good fit."*



Finally, if you are genuinely interested in the applicant, sell him/her on the job.

- You might explain your company benefit package first.
- Then cover the benefits of the organization - its history, atmosphere, and plans for the future.
- Last, summarize the selling points of the job, such as growth, advancement, salary, and freedom to innovate.

With the best candidates, look them squarely in the eye and tell them you are impressed by their qualifications, and will give them full consideration. Be sure you find out whether they have any pending job offers. After you determine your competition, if any, find out how long you have to decide whether to make them an offer and what factors might enter into their decision. That way you'll know best how to present the job offer.

Shake hands and lead them to the door. Remember to smile and thank them for their time. You have now successfully concluded the interview.

Evaluating the Candidates

When you have finished interviewing the finalists for a position, collect all the available information — i.e., your notes of their answers during the interview, your observations, what the applicants' references said, and the observations and opinions of others in your organization who met the candidates.

To be consistent, each candidate must be evaluated according to the same criteria. Next to each requirement, rate the candidate by the following method and indicate if your rating is based on documentation (D) they provided (or will provide) or experience (E) they described.

- 2= exceeds the requirement based on their experience or documentation
- 1 = fully meets the pre-set requirement
- -1= does not meet the requirement
- 0 = applicant could not provide example of this requirement

Let's use the traits we mentioned earlier on page 5 to evaluate these three applicants.

Position Requirements	Grant	Proof	Ben	Proof	Logan	Proof
Evidence of the technical skills we require (you would specify all the technical skills you require and score them individually. This provides documentation that you were fair and consistent in	1	D	1	D	2	D
The ability to multi-task	2	D	2	D	1	D
	1	D	2	D	1	D
	-1	E	0	D	1	D
The ability to ask questions and listen effectively	0	N/A	1	D	1	E
The ability to meet milestones and deadlines	1	E	2	E	0	N/A
The ability to work within a team effectively	1	D	2	E	0	N/A
The ability to know when to ask questions or escalate issues.	2	E	1	D	1	D
	0	N/A	1	D	1	E
The ability to act as a consultant for the client.	1	E	0	E	2	D
The ability to work alone without close supervision.	1	E	0	E	1	D
The ability to develop a relationship of trust and confidence with the client	0	N/A	1	D	0	N/A
Interview Score	9		13		11	

This is only a tool to help you organize your thoughts. It DOES NOT mean the highest score is hired.

Some Words of Caution

It would be wise to ask a Human Resources professional look over your list of questions to make sure they are all relevant to the position.

Be sure that YOU DO NOT DO THIS:

1. Do not ask questions about sex, race, religion, national origin, age, disability, marital status, ethnicity or any other area that is protected by federal, state or local statutes.
2. Do not ask whether they have ever filed a complaint with E.E.O.C., or for workers' compensation, or with a state labor commission. (Employees and applicants have rights to file these claims without fear of retaliation.)
3. To comply with the American with Disabilities Act, ask all applicants a question similar to the following. "Having been told or shown the job description highlighting the essential functions, can you perform this job with or without reasonable accommodation?" Whether the applicants are able-bodied or have a disability, if they answer **no**, you don't consider them. If they answer **yes**, you continue to probe, including asking them what reasonable accommodation would allow them to perform
4. Some job applications ask, "Have you ever been known by a different name?" If they answer "Yes", let the reason for that be discovered in the background check. They may have changed it for religious reasons. Since religion is RARELY relevant to job qualifications, you would be wise to not comment on that during the interview for fear of possible claims of discrimination later if they are not selected for the job.

Also, if it is an unusual name, **DO NOT MAKE A COMMENT!** If they are not selected, they may think their name (i.e., ethnic background, nationality) was a factor and claim discrimination.

Developing Relevant Interview Questions

Earlier, we talked about the need to identify behavioral skills (or traits) associated with a position you are trying to fill as well as technical skills (page 5) for a successful interview.

Once you have identified the behaviors and traits that are critical to the position, you can easily frame questions around them that will draw upon the applicant's experience and help you determine their fitness for the position.

Although we believe the thinking behind most of these questions is self-evident, we have elaborated on some for clarification.

BEHAVIORAL TRAIT	QUESTION BASED ON THAT TRAIT
Ability to Learn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What situations have you had in the past when you had to teach yourself how to do the job? If you could acquire a new skill or piece of knowledge, what would it be?
Ask Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe a time when the success of your project depended on your ability to ask questions and dig out relevant information.
Career Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do you know when you've outgrown a job and it's time to move on? What growth would you expect in a job like this?
Conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are examples of workplace conflict that you seem to encounter most? What situations at work seem to get you irritated most easily?
Consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Think of a time when you had to act as a consultant for a client. What was the situation? What difficulties did you encounter and how did you overcome them? What did you learn? [Problems when dealing with clients typically result from poor communication skills when requirements or expectations aren't clearly defined before hand.]
Creativity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Give me an example of when you demonstrated creativity in your job. What is one thing about your current job that seems to be very inefficient? [Do they look for ways to improve the job or just put in time while being inefficient?]
Decision Making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the typical criteria you use when making decisions? [Do they say something like the "end justifies the means" or do they mention legal, ethical, and moral considerations?] What's the biggest error in judgment you have made in a past job? [Can they admit to making mistakes?]

BEHAVIORAL TRAIT	QUESTION BASED ON THAT TRAIT
Dependable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What from your past would lead us to think you're dependable? Give me an example of a time when it was most difficult for you to be dependable. <i>[Were they a 'victim' or able to overcome the situation?]</i>
Escalate Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Think of a time when you needed to escalate issues for a decision or a resolution. What was the situation? Why were you not able to deal with it? How did you deal with the outcome?
Flexibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Give me an example of a time in your past when you had to be most flexible to accomplish the tasks. How would you deal with a situation where there seems to be frequently changing priorities? <i>[You may see fear in their eyes and they may ask you, "Is it like that here?" You can reduce their fear and regain control of the interview by saying something like, "Sometimes, every organization has times like that. How would you deal with it?"]</i>
Goal Achievement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What factors do you take into consideration when setting goals for yourself? If goals seem unachievable, what do you do? <i>[Do they negotiate trying to modify the goals or just blindly chase an impossible goal?]</i>
Initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What ways have you found to make your job more interesting? How were you able to overcome unexpected obstacles to a project you were working on?
Milestones & Deadlines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe a time when it was critical that you set a series of milestones and deadlines to meet client expectations. What events came up that threatened making those milestones? How did you deal with those events?
Motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do you motivate yourself for the job on days when it's hard to just get out of bed? What elements of a job do you find most rewarding?
Multi- Tasking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe a time when you had to multi-task. What were you doing? How did you determine priorities? What problems did you encounter?
Problem Solving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What kind of problems are you uniquely capable of solving? Why do you think so? What process do you follow when trying to solve problems?
Punctuality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What do you think are justifiable and unjustifiable reasons for employees to be late to work? How would your last supervisor describe your punctuality?
Stress Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What elements of a job do you find particularly stressful? How have you been able to deal with the inevitable stress associated with a job like this? <i>[Do they do anything to help themselves or just suffer through it?]</i>
Team Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe a time when you were part of a work team. What difficulties did you encounter and how did you overcome them? What are some difficulties typically involved with working on a team?

BEHAVIORAL TRAIT	QUESTION BASED ON THAT TRAIT
Time Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Describe a busy day in a past job. How would you organize your time and get everything done? [Do they mention reserving and protecting time or do you get the impression they feel events control them?]Where did you seem to waste then most time in your last job?
Trust & Confidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Describe a time when it was critical that you develop a sense of trust and confidence with a client. What were some of the obstacles facing you? How did you overcome them?
Work Alone	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Why would we think you could work alone without close supervision? From a manager's perspective, what do you think are some of the biggest challenges of having employees reporting to you that you do not see on a regular basis? [Issues of accountability frequently arise here. Listen for comments about clearly defined expectations and feedback loops where the leader gets data about the work performance without having to physically be present to observe.]
Work Load Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Describe a time when you were at your maximum with work. How did you keep from getting additional tasks without missing any deadlines or causing ill will? [Do they acknowledge there is a limit to the amount of work someone can do at one time or do they continually accept new tasks? Did they work with their leader to establish priorities or risk missing deadlines?]

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