



Interviewing Tools for Successful Hiring

University of San Diego - Human Resources

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10-Minute Pre-interview Checklist

KNOW THE JOB

What will the person actually do?

What are the qualifications needed?

KNOW THE ENVIRONMENT

What is the work environment like?

What kind of person does well here?

KNOW YOURSELF

What do you, the supervisor, offer?

What do you need in a candidate?

KNOW THE MARKET

What does USD offer?

What are current market constraints?

KNOW THE CANDIDATE

What are the qualities of the ideal candidate?

What is this candidate like?

When is the candidate available to begin work?

PREPARE FOR ALL CANDIDATES

What questions will you ask the candidates?

PREPARE FOR EACH CANDIDATE

Are strengths, weaknesses and unknowns established?

Are questions planned to cover them?

PREPARE FOR THE INTERVIEW

Are all arrangements made?

Are materials ready?

INTERVIEW & SELECTION WORKSHEET

INTRODUCTION (2-5 minutes)

- Introductions
- Small Talk
- Agenda

DATA COLLECTION (20 - 40 minutes)

- Position Requirements
- Experience, Knowledge & Skills
- Goals & Desires
- Candidate's Questions

DATA PRESENTATION (10 - 15 minutes)

- Employer
- Position
- Salary & Benefits
- Candidate's Questions

CLOSING (2 - 5 minutes)

- Next Steps

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW (5 - 10 minutes)

- Written Impression & Summary

REFERENCE CHECK

- Final Candidates
- Questions

MAKING A SELECTION

INTRODUCTION

The interview is a social process. The tone should be pleasant, but business-like. It is important to establish a good rapport and help the candidate to feel comfortable and relaxed. Consider giving the candidate the job description to read before the interview and be open with information about the job.

Introductions

Introduce yourself, shake hands and show genuine interest in the candidate. If there is a question about the candidate's name, ask what name is preferred and/or clarify the pronunciation.

Small Talk

Get the interview off to a good start by discussing things that are not threatening. You may consider something from the candidate's resume (I see you are interested in photography). Other subjects might include parking, the weather, etc.

Agenda

Let the candidate know what to expect in the interview process (approximate time frame, who is to be included...) For example:

“I am the Manager of Employment and the supervisor for this position. We will be talking about your experience, your career interests and what you can offer USD. I will give you information about our department, USD and the benefits we offer. You will have an opportunity to ask questions. I want to be sure that all your questions are answered. The whole process should take about an hour.”

If you intend to take notes during the process, let the candidate know.

DATA COLLECTION

This section is the heart of the interview. It is here that you will probe for information about the candidate, such as: experience, knowledge and skills in relationship to the job. Structure your questions so that the candidate tells you how they have handled situations (similar to what they will find in the job) in the past. *Remember that past performance is the best predictor of future performance.*

Position Requirements

Review the basic job description and ask the candidate if she/he is able to perform the essential functions of the job either with or without accommodation.

Experience, Knowledge & Skills

Here you will explore the experience, knowledge and skills that the candidate has acquired. Prepare a sheet of questions that you will ask all candidates and a set of questions specific to each individual candidate. The questions should be linked directly to the requirements stated in the job description. (See Sample Questions)

Probing is a key element in this portion of the interview. Ask for details. If the candidate states, she/he was in charge of a project, additional information you may want to probe for:
the scope of the project, the actual responsibilities, the number of people involved, the budget, the outcome, etc.

Listen carefully to each response and allow the answer to lead into other questions. A rule of thumb to remember during this time is that you should be talking 20% of the time, the candidate 80%. Use silence effectively. Silence provides time to think. Interviewers who wait out the silence will learn more than those who don't. A candidate, sensing more information is desired, will often provide more pertinent information. It is important in this portion of interview to allow silence.

Goals & Desires

Here you will assess the candidate's goals and expectations of the job. This is important in determining job satisfaction. An individual seeking rapid advancement or a high profile position may not be satisfied working in the available job. (See Sample Questions)

Candidate's Questions

Ask the candidate if she/he has any questions regarding the job or any additional information they would like to add about his/her qualifications for the position.

DATA PRESENTATION

The data presentation is an important aspect of the interview process whether or not the applicant is a promising candidate. It is an opportunity to inform the candidate about the University. Although this individual may not be a possibility for your current position, she/he may do well in another position in your department or in another area of campus. This portion of the interview can make or break the candidate's opinion of the University.

Employer

Talk positively about what makes USD a unique and special place to work. Talk about future plans of the University. This is an opportune time to discuss the Catholic nature of the University. Let the candidate know that USD is an *independent* catholic institution and is not financed by the Catholic Church. People are not required to be Catholic to work here.

Position

Tell the candidate about the position and the department. What is a typical day like, what are typical projects, what is the working environment?

Benefits

Make a brief presentation about the benefits package. USD has an excellent benefits package and in a competitive market for employees it can make the difference to the candidate.

Candidate's Questions

Open the discussion to any questions from the candidate. Take care in answering these questions no matter how trivial they may seem. They are important to the candidate or the questions would not have been asked. If the candidate asks a tough question to which you don't know the answer, tell the candidate you will research the information and get back to her/him. Be sure to follow-up.

BE PREPARED FOR THESE QUESTIONS

Can you describe the corporate culture here?

How long have you been here?

What do you like and not like about working here?

What are you like as a supervisor?

What is the most difficult thing about you as a supervisor?

Why is this position open?

What is the average turnover in this position?

What is the biggest difficulty I would face in this job?

When do I get a raise?

Do you promote from within?

What is your policy on women and minorities?

CLOSING

Be sure all the candidate's questions have been answered and close the interview on a positive note.

Next Steps

Explain what will happen next in the process. When appropriate, tell the candidate that you will be contacting references. Let the candidate know when you anticipate making a decision and how the candidate will be notified about the decision. Be careful not to lead the candidate to believe that she/he has the job. Be gracious, thank the candidate and escort him/her to the door.

SUMMARY OF THE INTERVIEW

Written Impression & Summary

When the candidate leaves, review your notes and make any additional comments. At the moment, it may seem easy to remember everything that took place in the interview. Two or three days later and after several other interviews, it is difficult to distinguish one interview from another.

REFERENCE CHECKING

Final Candidates

ALWAYS CHECK REFERENCES. Check the references of your top candidates. A future employer has the legal obligation to check references. Prepare your questions in advance. Ask job-related questions.

Explain to the reference who you are and why you are calling. Thank him/her for taking the time to talk with you about the candidate. Describe the position and explain that the candidate is one of the finalists in the selection process.

Questions

Prepare your questions in advance. Review the interview notes before preparing questions for the reference check.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS

- Describe the candidate's position: duties and requirements.
- How did the candidate perform in his/her position?
- What did you consider to be the candidate's strengths? Weaknesses?
- Did the candidate receive any promotions in your organization?
- Why did the candidate leave your organization?
- Did you have any problems with this employee?
- How did the candidate handle conflict situations?
- How did the candidate get along with co-workers?
- Do you consider the candidate to be reliable?
- Would you rehire this candidate?

Listen carefully to each response before asking the next question. Pay attention to the tone of voice, note hesitancy, evasiveness and other forms of subtle communication. Consider speaking to other references; co-workers and subordinates can frequently supply valuable information.

If the reference will not cooperate ask if he/she would like a personal call from the candidate authorizing him/her to speak with you. Let the reference know that you are trying to help the candidate get a job at USD. The reference's unwillingness to give information will not help the candidate. Always thank the reference for his/her time and cooperation.

MAKING A SELECTION

Compare each candidate's qualifications to the job requirements and departmental needs. Base your evaluation on the facts. Examine the skills and knowledge level of each candidate. Are the skills and knowledge adequate to meet the departments needs? Are they adaptable to the job?

- Evaluate the candidate's experience and past performance against your job requirements.
- Identify each candidate's strengths and weaknesses? How will they impact the job?
- Evaluate indicators of stability and progress.
- Will the candidate be compatible with others in the department?

Weigh your department's needs and job requirements with what each candidate is able to offer. Are you able to compromise specific requirements for the candidates' strengths in other areas.

Notify your Human Resources Representative to formalize the job offer.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS

Please note the following questions are formatted to be conversational.

PREVIOUS EMPLOYMENT

Tell me about a typical day at your job - what do you do, who do you see?

What is the most frustrating thing about your current job?

Tell me your reasons for leaving your current position?

What are the routine responsibilities of your job?

How have the responsibilities in your current position increased from when you originally accepted it?

What was your most important contribution to your job/organization?

SUPERVISOR/SUPERVISION

How would you describe your supervisor?

What are your supervisor's greatest strengths? Weaknesses?

Describe the qualities of the *best* supervisor you have worked for?

Describe the qualities of the *worst* supervisor you have worked for?

What do you consider essential in the supervision of people?

How would you describe yourself as a manager?

Tell me about a situation when you disagreed with someone in authority.

RELATIONSHIP WITH CO-WORKERS

Tell me about a conflict situation you were involved in at work? How did you handle the conflict? What was the outcome?

What kind of people do you most *enjoy* working with?

What kind of people do you find *difficult* to work with?

ON-THE-JOB

What about your job is important to you?

What does this job offer you that your current/previous one does not?

Describe a time when there were no established policies or procedures in place, but you had to take action.

Tell me how you would handle (give a sample situation)?

Describe a time when you had to be persistent in order to reach work goals.

Tell me about when you have been able to concentrate effectively on a task, amidst distraction.

Describe a high stress situation you've been in where it was important for you to remain calm and maintain a positive attitude.

Describe a work experience that demonstrates your ability to organize multiple tasks.

What is the most difficult challenge you've faced in your current position? How did you overcome it?

Describe your ideal work environment?

Tell me about a time when you had no formal authority to resolve a situation, but were able to influence the outcome?

SELF-ASSESSMENT/GOALS

Tell me about yourself?

Describe yourself in three (one, five) words.

What assets (strengths) do you bring to this job?

What areas or weaknesses are you trying to improve?

What constructive criticisms did you receive from last supervisor?

What are your career goals?

What did your last performance review reveal about you?

What kind of assignments really challenge you?

PRE-EMPLOYMENT INQUIRY GUIDELINES

The following guidelines identify some of the most common pre-employment inquiry problem areas. An attempt has been made to take into account and incorporate most state and federal laws. Please be aware that laws and the interpretations of the laws may change. **It is crucial that you keep all questions strictly job related.**

SUBJECT	ACCEPTABLE	UNACCEPTABLE
Age	<p>Statement that hire is subject to verification that applicant meets legal age requirements, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ If hired can you show proof of age? ✓ Are you over eighteen years of age? ✓ If under eighteen, can you submit a work permit, if an offer of employment is made? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ How old are you? ✓ What is your date of birth? ✓ Dates of attendance or completion of elementary or high school? ✓ Questions which may tend to identify applicants as being over the age of 40.
Arrest/ Criminal Record	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Have you ever been <i>convicted</i> of a felony? (Such a statement must be accompanied by a statement that a conviction will not necessarily disqualify applicant from the job for which he/she applied.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Have you ever been arrested?
Birthplace	Statement that proof of eligibility to work in the United States is a condition of employment.	Birthplace of applicant, or applicant's parents, spouse or relative.
Bonding	Statement that bonding is a condition of employment.	Questions regarding refusal or cancellation of bonding.
Citizenship	Statement that proof of eligibility to work in the United States is a condition of employment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Are you a U.S. citizen? Requirements that applicant produce naturalization papers or alien card <i>prior</i> to employment.
Disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Do you have any physical condition or disability, which may limit your ability to perform the job for which you have applied? If yes, what can be done to accommodate your limitation? 	Questions regarding applicant's general medical condition, state of health or illness. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Do you have any disabilities or handicaps?
Economic Status		Questions regarding applicant's current or past assets, liabilities or credit rating, including bankruptcy or garnishment.
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ What is the highest grade you have completed? ✓ What academic, vocational or professional schools have you attended? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Are you a high school graduate? ✓ What year did you graduate from high school?

SUBJECT	ACCEPTABLE	UNACCEPTABLE
Family	<p>Name and address of parent or guardian, if applicant is a minor.</p> <p>Statement of company policy regarding work assignment of employees who are related.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Questions, which ask about applicant's marital status. ✓ Number or ages of children or dependents. ✓ Provisions for childcare. ✓ Questions regarding pregnancy, child bearing or birth control. ✓ Name or address of relative, spouse or children of adult applicant. ✓ With whom do you reside?
Gender		<p>Questions, which indicate or refer to the applicant's gender.</p>
Language	<p>What languages do you speak/write fluently? (Ask only if job-related!)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ What is your native tongue? ✓ How did you learn a foreign language?
Marital Status	<p>Statement of company policy regarding work assignment of employees who are related.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Are you married, single, divorced or separated?
Military Service	<p>Questions regarding relevant skills acquired during applicant's U.S. military service.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ General questions regarding military services such as dates and type of discharge. ✓ Questions regarding service in a foreign military.
Name	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Please indicate any other names by which you have been employed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ What is your maiden name?
National Origin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ What languages do you speak/write fluently? (Ask only if job-related!) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Questions regarding nationality, lineage, ancestry, national origin, descent, or parentage of applicant, applicant's parents or spouse. ✓ What is your (or your parents) native tongue? ✓ How did you learn a foreign language?
Organizations /Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Please list job-related organizations, clubs, professional societies or other associations to which you belong - you may omit those which may indicate your race, religious creed, color, national origin, ancestry, gender or age. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ List all organizations, clubs, societies and lodges to which you belong.
Physical Description/ Photograph	<p>Statement that a photograph may be required after an offer of employment has been extended.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Questions regarding applicant's height and weight. ✓ Requiring applicant to affix a photograph to application. ✓ Requesting an applicant to submit a photograph at his/her option.

SUBJECT	ACCEPTABLE	UNACCEPTABLE
Race		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Questions regarding applicant's race or color. ✓ Questions regarding applicant's complexion; color of skin, eyes, hair, etc....
References	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Who referred you for a position here? Names of persons willing to provide professional and/or character references for applicant.	Questions of applicants former employers or acquaintances which elicit information specifying the applicant's race, color, religious creed, national origin, ancestry, physical handicap, medical condition, marital status, age or gender.
Religion	Statement by employer of regular days, hours or shifts to be worked.	Questions regarding applicant's religion, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Does your religion prevent you from working weekends or holidays?
Residence	Place of residence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Do you own or rent?