

Recruiting, Interviewing & Hiring

Compliments of



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RECRUITING, INTERVIEWING AND HIRING

PREFACE

One of the major reasons for excessive turnover often goes unconsidered – **MANAGEMENT FAILURE** –and often this management failure starts before the applicant is hired. It happens when a manager:

1. Lacks interviewing skills.
2. Chooses from too small a pool of applicants.
3. Doesn't know what behavioral characteristics are needed to fill a specific job.
4. Selects the best applicant from a poor group.
5. Allows personal feelings to overcome good judgment.
6. Is unable to put all the information about an applicant together to arrive at a logical decision.

Since management failure is the primary cause of turnover, it becomes apparent that the recruiting, interviewing and hiring of employees is one of the most important things a manager does. When it is done well, turnover will drop and productivity will increase.

RECRUITING

The need to recruit and select better qualified employees is a continuous process in any dynamic company. To effectively satisfy future requirements, a strong recruiting program must be initiated by all managers.

All managers must recognize the hiring process for what it actually is – the purchasing of services. It involves “buying” one of the most costly commodities in the world, manpower. Costs will obviously vary between companies but hiring and training a new employee is said to cost between \$10,000 and \$75,000 in direct expenses during the first year. These are “hard” dollars and do not include business lost by inept employees. All managers must put aside their selling attitude and become a careful “buyer” when recruiting and selecting employees.

Planned recruiting has several objectives:

1. To upgrade the quality and productivity of the company.
2. To recruit candidates with the qualifications necessary for success.
3. To recruit candidates with capabilities and potential for growth.
4. To eliminate the guesswork from the selection process.
5. To keep turnover to a minimum.
6. To minimize lost time due to open positions.

In order to have a successful recruiting process you must **KNOW WHAT YOU ARE LOOKING FOR!**

All managers should have a list of desirable specifications that are basic and practical and should look for these when recruiting and selecting. These specifications could be the following:

Minimum Education	--	Usually a college graduate or equivalent.
Related Experience	--	Not necessarily required but desirable.
Job Stability	--	More than two full time positions in the last five years could be a caution sign that must be carefully evaluated.
Leisure Time Activities	--	Some activities that contribute to both mental and physical well-being.
Interest	--	Keen, expressed interest in your business.

Continuous recruiting develops a reserve of qualified candidates and can often eliminate “crash recruiting” programs. Many qualified candidates may be currently employed and willing to wait until an opening occurs. There are some new twists surfacing to help the recruitment effort but experience has shown the following to be effective sources:

1. Referrals from current employees, personal acquaintances and business contacts.
2. Direct applicant contact (one who comes to you unsolicited).
3. Employment agencies.
4. Media ads.
5. College and university placement bureaus.

By whatever means a candidate is located, the most important segment of the process is yet to come.

INTERVIEWING

Each candidate participating in the interview process should be asked, **“Is there anything that would prevent you from performing the essential functions of the job?”**

The most important step in the process is interviewing and, unfortunately, probably where the fewest skills lie. Many good managers lack the proper skills to conduct a successful interview simply because they have never been taught. Too many hiring decisions are based on what the interviewer likes and dislikes about the applicant and not on “What is the job?” and “Can the applicant do it?” Good interviewing skills are not difficult to learn and costly hiring mistakes can be avoided through the proper application of these skills.

Interviewing is a “process” rather than a single meeting. Prior to the time an applicant can be seriously considered for employment, they will have progressed through at least two different types of interviews – The Screening Interview (mini interview) and The Selection Interview (interviewer’s guide). There is little similarity between the two.

THE SCREENING INTERVIEW is a brief conversation and can be conducted either in person or over the phone (in person is the obvious first choice) and is designed to do two things:

1. Immediately eliminate the obviously unqualified.
2. Make arrangements for those qualified to receive an application and set up a mutually convenient time for the selection interview.

NOTE: It is imperative that all applicants - qualified or not - be treated courteously, friendly and fairly!!!

The screening interview, whether by phone or in person, is a very structured conversation. The first step is to ask the applicant each question on the mini-interview form (sample attached). Don’t ad lib and don’t take time to go into the job description. If it becomes obvious from the applicant’s answers that they lack the basic job requirements, politely but firmly terminate the interview.

When all the questions have been asked and answered and it is apparent the applicant does possess the basic requirements and is interested in pursuing the job further, offer an application. If accepted, arrange a reasonable time for the applicant to complete and return the application. Ideally, the applicant should be offered an appropriate spot to sit down and fill out the application immediately.

After receiving and reviewing the application, contact the applicant to arrange for the next step – the Selection Interview.

NOTE: Your application should only be offered to those who meet your basic job requirements as determined by the screening process. Any applicant - qualified or not - who insists on receiving an application should be given one.

The application must be completed in an accurate and legible manner after the initial screening and prior to the selection interview. *Ample time should be allowed for review between the receipt of the application and the time set for the interview.*

The application is designed to:

1. Provide basic information on the applicant’s background.
2. Assist the interviewer in planning for the selection interview.
3. Indicate areas in the applicant’s background requiring more explanation or clarification.
4. Provide a permanent record of the applicant that will become an integral part of his personnel file.

In addition to the application, a copy of a resume is also desired. You may want to ask the applicant to complete a list of home addresses, in chronological order, for the last 5-10 years. This information is useful for background checks.

REVIEWING THE APPLICATION

Name and Address Section:

Look carefully at this section and prepare direct questions about it. If applicable, make sure the address on the application and the address on the resume match. If it's different, ask why.

Prepare probing questions about the information contained in this (and every) section. Questions like: "Is this your current address?" and / or "Do you live here permanently?"

Do not accept just a box number or general delivery. Make sure they also give a physical address (although they can add a box number if they receive their mail at a Post Office box). Applicants with rural route numbers should be asked to write directions to their residence.

Job Interests Section:

It's important to know that the applicant's expectations are relatively close to the job being offered. If the job is a trainee position starting at \$15,000 per year and the applicant says he or she wants to start at \$40,000 in a vice president's spot, you have a problem. Similarly, if you are hiring full-time and the applicant wants part-time, you may have a problem. The point is, there may be some conditions that will make it impossible for the applicant to take the job and you may waste a lot of time if you don't find out right away.

Also, make sure to find out if an applicant has ever applied to, or been employed, by your organization. Imagine how embarrassed you would be if you hired someone who had been fired by another manager or hired an applicant who had been previously rejected. You might, in the end, make the decision to go ahead with the hire, but wouldn't you want to know? Of course you would.

Education and Training Section:

The amount of education required will be determined by the needs of the job being offered and by company policy. Within the parameters set by your requirements, an applicant's educational background may be a reflection of their personality. Individuals who worked their way through night school (even for a high school diploma) may show that they have drive, maturity and strong desire to succeed. Remember that not all successful people take the normal routes.

If a college or advanced degree or certificate is required, be sure to verify the diploma. It's surprising how many people successfully pass themselves off as college graduates. It's equally surprising how few employers check. Yale University says they get only about ten inquiries per month from employers to confirm degrees. Some of those checked are not legitimate graduates. Make an education verification part of your screening process. It isn't necessary to wait for the reply before you hire. Simply make the hire provisional based on verification of the information provided.

Finally, ask direct questions about grades and attendance. An applicant is many times more likely to succeed at work if they had either above average grades or good attendance in school.

Work Experience Section:

For your purposes, the most important data available is the applicant's job history. An applicant will tend to repeat past behavior. If there is a history of success and job stability, they are likely to repeat that history with your company. On the other hand, if there is a history of problems at work, you can safely assume that they will continue to share those same problems with you as their new employer.

In looking at the work experience section, examine the level of completion. Have directions been followed? Has the information asked for been given? Are there any blank spaces? Make sure the information for each job is adequate for you to locate their previous employers and check their references. For most applicants, their job history may fill all the spaces available. Check that there is not a large gap between leaving school and the first job, or between one job and the other. If there is, there may be an excellent reason. Find out what it is. Any gap longer than a month or two is worth investigation. Gaps of three months or longer require serious scrutiny. They should be given a blank piece of paper to explain these gaps.

Make sure they put down their supervisor's name. You'll need to speak with their supervisor, not just a receptionist or a clerk in the Human Resource Department. A supervisor is more likely to talk to you and tell you what the employee was like to work with. Even a cagey supervisor will inadvertently give you more information than the Human Resource Department. Make sure that it is their direct supervisor and not just a friend still working for the company.

Closely examine and carefully probe the duties they had at their previous jobs. Apart from seeing whether these duties would have prepared the applicant for the job you have available, see if they seem to fit the job title and pay scale.

The section entitled "Reason for Leaving" can often provide interesting examples of creative writing. More than that, they can help you uncover problem areas on previous jobs. When you properly question the applicant on their reasons for leaving (particularly reasons that look suspect), you are likely to get helpful information from them. While a person may be able to conceal the events that led to problems on a previous job, it will be hard for them to conceal immature and non-productive attitudes. Keep probing and they will often reveal themselves.

Applicants often write euphemisms like "personal conflict" when they mean that there were circumstances so serious that they were forced out of their jobs, either through termination or forced resignation. Evasive answers like these are a warning sign that the person is hiding something from you and betting that you will not be thorough enough in your investigation to find out. Other warning signs may be responses like these:

"Laid off": Maybe, and maybe they were fired.

"Problem at home": Why did it affect their job? What really happened?

"Didn't want to commute" or "Couldn't afford the gas": Fine, if they moved without delay to an equal or better job.

"Company went out of business": Tough to check, so try to probe harder here.

"Argument with my boss": And they lost! What was the argument about? How does this differ from being fired?

"Moved": Your job is to find out why. Was there a problem?

And best of all:

"Quit": Of course they did! You want to know the reason.

Everybody makes mistakes, both as an employee and employer. An applicant who states that they were fired from a job, is able to admit responsibility for their part of the problem and who is willing to discuss it with you should, in most cases, be acceptable to you as an applicant. An applicant who tries to omit or misrepresent the problem may be someone still carrying the problem with them.

References Section:

Applicants have the option to provide you with professional and character references. If they are provided, references can be extremely helpful to you. Interviewers often assume that it isn't worth checking an applicant's list of references and relatives. They assume that an applicant won't list someone who would give a negative referral.

References can be used, however, to compare dates of schooling, employment and / or residence. Often, they will inadvertently contradict information the applicant has given. When this happens, follow up discreetly. Ask the reference to provide other references. These "third-party" references are often the most honest and informative.

Remember that the only reason you are checking these personal references is to screen out the chronically unsuccessful applicant. They are the people who make judgments and decisions based on their own erroneous view of the world. They are likely to make serious misjudgments about many things, including their personal references.

Residences Section:

A list of past residences can be helpful in a variety of ways. Apartment managers can often provide character references. While they may not know the average applicant, they will usually know the troublemakers. They may be able to corroborate work history with their records and may be able to lead you to third-party references.

By carefully checking and comparing work and residence records, you may uncover jobs that were not listed in the work history. Cross-checking these areas is a great way to make sure the information matches.

Military Experience Section:

An applicant's military history is essentially an extension of their work history and should be treated with the same attention. People who had trouble with their military services may carry those same problems over into civilian life. Before you ask specific questions about this section, check your state laws. In some states, it isn't legal to ask questions about an applicant's military service.

If the laws in your state allow it, ask to see their discharge papers – a form called the DD-214. Read the paper carefully. Normally it should say "Honorable Discharge." If it doesn't, find out why. Note that a dishonorable or general discharge is not an absolute bar to employment. Other factors will affect a final decision to hire or not to hire. Since military service teaches a person a variety of skills, we would expect them to say that they did acquire skills that would help them on the job. These skills need not be technical. The fact that they learned good work habits, leadership traits and discipline are important. If they don't think these are important, ask them why.

Personal Information Section:

You must verify each applicant's ability to work legally in the United States. Today's new immigration laws offer penalties to employers who hire illegal aliens.

It's important for you to know if a person has been convicted of crimes that could make him or her a danger to customers or to other employees. Some employers have been held responsible for the criminal acts of their employees by courts who say that they should have known of the employee's criminal history. Unfortunately, from this point of view, it may be very difficult to find out about previous convictions. With **Selection.com** at your disposal, there should be no questions as to the employee's past criminal history. **Don't hesitate to ask the applicant if they have ever been convicted of a crime.**

Driving Record Section:

This section should be completed by all applicants who will drive in the course of their work for the company. Don't assume that all adults have a driver's license, even if they drive to work. Validate their license and make sure it's valid. If they have ever had their license revoked or suspended, find out why. You'll also want to know about any accidents or tickets received lately, particularly if there is an ongoing pattern of poor driving. This information will be important for other reasons as well. A person with a history of driving while intoxicated may also have been working while intoxicated. They may have substance abuse problems that will affect their ability to perform their jobs.

Certification and Understanding Section:

Make sure the applicant signs this section, it can be important later. Employers have limited rights in hiring. It's important to protect all the rights you do have.

THE SELECTION INTERVIEW

The purpose of this interview is to:

1. Provide the interviewer with an opportunity to obtain facts and information from the applicant, relevant to employment, that are unavailable from other sources and evaluate qualifications against job-related behavioral characteristics.
2. Provide job and company information so that the applicant has a factual basis for accepting or rejecting employment, if offered.
3. Decide, based on the information obtained from the interview, whether the applicant should be rejected, recommended for employment or scheduled for further interviewing.

No interviewer can make an informed decision simply by looking at someone or talking with them in generalities. The information necessary to properly measure and evaluate an applicant can only be obtained through effective interviewing techniques. There are six basic components to conducting a successful interview:

- | | |
|-------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Preparation | 4. Giving Information |
| 2. Establishing Rapport | 5. Closing |
| 3. Getting Information | 6. Evaluation and Recommendation |

PREPARATION is an important part of any interview. The application should have been reviewed (never proceed without a completed application) and a list made of any areas which require further clarification, explanation or exploration. As per the previous section, prepare a list of questions to be used during the interview to help obtain necessary information. Two other basics involved in preparation are to provide proper surroundings for the interview and to schedule adequate time. The time needed will vary depending on the position you are interviewing to fill. If you have any doubts, schedule more than enough time initially until you are able to determine an appropriate length of interview.

ESTABLISHING RAPPORT is the art of putting the applicant at ease. Greet the applicant by name and begin the conversation with some general topics. When you are certain the applicant is at ease, begin the interview by explaining why you have a job opening.

Ask the applicant to tell you what he knows about the job and then briefly explain the job. However, DON'T SELL THE JOB TOO EARLY IN THE INTERVIEW. Give all the facts but save your selling talk until you are ready to conclude the interview and you are convinced this applicant is a qualified candidate for employment. This way, you will find it easier to terminate the interview if it becomes apparent that this applicant is NOT the right person for the job.

GETTING INFORMATION is your job. You cannot expect an applicant to provide you with what you want without direction. This is where the list of questions you wrote down during your preparation comes into play. Personalize your questions but stay within the guidelines of EEO laws. **ONLY ASK QUESTIONS THAT ARE JOB RELATED!** Questions must be asked in a casual and impersonal manner if you are to get factual information. Also, **RECORD ANSWERS AS THEY ARE GIVEN!** Your interview notes are an important selection tool and must be clear, concise and accurate. You will need the written record during evaluation and other people may need to review your notes before approving the applicant for hire.

The applicant's response to the questions you ask should help you evaluate him in several crucial job-related areas:

- | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Motivation | 6. Intelligence |
| 2. Integrity | 7. Communication Skills |
| 3. Job Interest | 8. Planning and Organization |
| 4. Interpersonal Skills | 9. Adaptability and Flexibility |
| 5. Initiative | |

It is important that an individual's skills and characteristics match the job requirements. Studies show that where individuals are properly matched to the job, they dramatically outperform those who are not matched! Therefore, productivity increases and turnover is reduced. It is in your best interest to **DO IT RIGHT THE FIRST TIME** and hire the individuals who best fit the position. They will be more likely to stay and succeed.

All the above areas are important and should be weighed individually and collectively in making a judgment. Remember, **PEOPLE TEND TO DO IN THE FUTURE WHAT THEY HAVE DONE IN THE PAST**. We repeat both our successes and failures.

The Selection Interview is concerned with two phases:

1. The formative years and education;
2. Present life and work experience.

The first phase is important in the fact that fundamental characteristics of a personality are formed. We tend to carry those characteristics throughout life.

A candidate's work experience and present life are what we are looking at as an adult person. This phase can tell us about the career course an individual has plotted and can show the effects of prior jobs and experiences. Your goal during an interview is to obtain job-related information that is not readily available from other sources. It is necessary then that the applicant do most of the talking.

REMEMBER: If you hear your own voice more than 30% of the time, you've lost control of the interview. Ask questions and LISTEN!

Explain the path the interview will take. Tell the applicant you are going to make a careful effort to obtain complete facts so the proper consideration can be given for the position to be filled. When the interview is over, you must have enough facts to make a rational decision in regard to the employment of the applicant.

No one can provide a comprehensive list of questions that will fit all Selection Interviews, but some suggestions are attached. The questions must be customized for the particular job opening and applicant. There are some basics, however, to keep in mind when formulating questions for specific interviews:

1. Avoid leading questions - never phrase a question which suggests a preferable answer
2. Avoid yes or no questions - elicit information
3. Avoid irrelevant questions - use only while establishing rapport
4. Use probing questions - encourage elaboration by using "What do you mean by...", "Tell me more about ...", "Give me an example of..."
5. Avoid antagonizing questions - use neutral words, softening introductory phrases and qualifying phrases
6. Use open-ended questions - get the applicant talking, this is where you get the information you need to properly evaluate an applicant

GIVING INFORMATION should be done honestly and clearly. Answer the applicant's questions during the interview as presented but hold your enthusiasm for the job and the company in check until you are sure the applicant is qualified for the job. **DO NOT OVERSELL THE JOB AT THE BEGINNING OF THE INTERVIEW!** If this is done and the applicant found to be unqualified, the task of rejection becomes more difficult and unpleasant for both.

When **CLOSING** an interview and it has been determined that the applicant is qualified, present the favorable aspects of the job and the opportunities available. Be honest but always speak in averages rather than specifics. This allows you to provide an applicant with an understanding rather than a misunderstanding of their potential. Give the applicant a clear picture of the job and its' requirements, training provided, compensation plan, history of the company, benefits, advancement potential, etc. Even though you cannot make a job offer at this time, the qualified applicant should leave the interview encouraged and enthusiastic about their prospects. The applicant should also be given a **SPECIFIC** length of time in which to hear from you.

You may screen and interview many applicants for every one hired. Therefore, **REGARDLESS OF THE REASONS FOR REJECTING AN APPLICANT, THEY SHOULD NEVER BE RELAYED TO THE APPLICANT.** Even though the basis of rejection may seem obvious to you, they may not be clear or even acceptable to the applicant. More often than not, your good intentions will be met with counter arguments that create problems, waste time and cause resentment and hostility. Avoid discussions of this type by telling all interviewed applicants they will be informed of your decision after you have completed all interviews. It is good business practice to inform unsuccessful applicants of your decision by mail. **DO NOT GET TRAPPED INTO THIS DISCUSSION. TELL UNSUCCESSFUL APPLICANTS ONLY THAT, IN YOUR OPINION, YOU SELECTED A BETTER QUALIFIED APPLICANT!**

EVALUATING AND RECOMMENDING are done after interviewing is over. You must study the notes taken during the actual interview, compare all applicants, weigh the information and make an informed decision as to the best applicant for the position. This individual is then either recommended for employment or offered the position.

VERIFICATION OF INFORMATION

In most cases, it is wise to verify information given to you by the applicant. As anyone would know, many applicants can and will falsify information in order to secure a position. If false information is placed on an application, sometimes it will become obvious through discrepancies during either the Screening or Selection interview. In many instances, however, the applicant is enough in control to maintain the lie.

Selection.com can reliably and economically verify information regarding an applicant's background. We can legally and discreetly provide you with a tool that can allow you to know that you are hiring someone who "is what they say they are". To find out more about **Selection.com**, please call 1-800-325-3609.

Your hiring process is now complete and you have filled your position with someone who will both be happy with the position and perform well for the company. There are no guarantees regardless of what process is followed but, by following a few simple and proven guidelines, your turnover will decrease and productivity will rise because you hire the right person for the job.

SCREENING QUESTIONNAIRE

INTERVIEWED BY: _____

DATE: _____

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE: _____

- 1. Did you graduate from college? _____
- 2. What was your major? _____
- 3. What kind of position are you seeking? _____
- 4. What work experience have you had? _____
- 5. Are you presently employed? Yes _____ No _____
- 6. What were the dates of your present or last employment? _____ to _____
- 7. What kind of work did you do? _____
- 8. What minimum salary would you accept? _____
- 9. Have you ever been convicted of a crime other than a minor traffic offense? Yes _____ No _____
If yes, explain: _____
- 10. Are you willing to relocate? _____
- 11. Are you willing to travel overnight, if necessary? _____
- 12. Do you have a valid driver's license? Yes _____ No _____
- 13. This job may require some evening work of various types. Would you be willing to commit your time to that? _____

APPLICATION OFFERED: YES _____ NO _____

HELPFUL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- **Tell me what you did at your last job. What were your responsibilities?**
If no specifics can be given, the applicant either did not have the job they claimed or never understood it.
- **What did you like most about your last job?**
Successful applicants will usually relate to their positive experiences, unsuccessful applicants to their negative ones.
- **What did you like least about your last job?**
If they were frustrated at their last job, listen carefully for indications that they may encounter the same frustrations with you. If you can't cure that, tell them so.
- **Tell me about the circumstances that led to your decision to leave your last job.**
If something doesn't make sense here, question harder. If there was a problem, look for patterns of problems.
- **If you could have made one suggestion to management at your last job, what would it have been?**
Saying they can't think of anything may mean they aren't perceptive or thoughtful.
- **What have you done that makes you proud?**
Look for recent accomplishments. Successful people are often the most proud of the recent things.
- **Tell me about the best boss you ever had. Why did you like working for him or her?**
If the shoe fits, great. If not, look for compatibility problems.
- **Describe the worst boss you ever had.**
Look for people who can temper their criticism with humility and acceptance. Otherwise, you may be next on the list.
- **How do you like to be managed? How would you manage others?**
Do they have unrealistic expectations of the management process?
- **What would you say is your greatest strength?**
Listen. Does their strength fit the job?
- **What bothers you the most at work?**
Again, listen. How does this compare to the realities of the job?
- **What are you looking for in a job change?**
Compare this to the job being interviewed for.
- **What else would you like me to know about you?**
This can be a real eye-opener.
- **What else would you like to know about the company?**
Answer honestly but within the guidelines discussed in the interview section.