



Interviewing Candidates

The Spencer Group Client Toolkit



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Specialist Recruitment Solutions

Interviewing Candidates.

After receiving your shortlist from The Spencer Group, you may decide to interview some or all of the applicants. As the interview is the most frequently used aid to making a selection decision, it is important to prepare and conduct the employment interview so that the process is valid and contributes successfully to the selection process.

Many people have difficulty with the interview process...not just the interviewee ...the interviewer themselves may be unused to dealing with prospective staff, or may not feel confident that they are going to ask the right questions that will enable them to make the right choice.

Conducting Employment Interviews

Prior preparation is important...

Thorough preparation ensures that the interview will flow smoothly. The Spencer Group will call applicants on your behalf to arrange mutually convenient times and places to meet.

Asking questions is the main method of retrieving information from the applicant.

The following guidelines will help your preparation of questions:

- Ask open questions, that is, questions that require more than 'yes' or 'no' answers. This allows the applicant opportunity to tell you about themselves, their skills and experience.
- Start with easy questions and gradually build to more difficult or searching questions.
- It may be beneficial to begin questions with 'what', 'why', 'where', 'when' or 'how' then, depending upon the response, ask more direct questions.
- Do not ask leading questions that imply the right answer – you will only hear what you want to hear!
- Ask only one question at a time.

Some Good Interview Questions...

What do you know about our company/firm/business? – this shows if the applicant has researched your business, what you do and what the job is about.

Tell me about yourself – the information provided when answering this question may promote additional conversation and allows you to get to know the applicant a little better.

Why are you the best person for this job? – this question allows the opportunity for the applicant to describe their best points in relation to the position.

What areas will you need to improve in so that you can perform this position competently? – it is beneficial to see if the applicant realizes the areas they need to improve in and if they are still able to 'sell' themselves to you.

When can you start? – an easily overlooked question, there is no use employing an applicant that may not be able to start work for some time.

Ask questions about their skills and experience that relate to the position – to clarify their level of skills and determine if this level is suitable for the position.

Privacy and discrimination

Privacy and discrimination are two issues that will need to be considered when preparing interview questions. So that applicants do not 'get the wrong idea', only ask questions relevant to the assessment of the person's suitability for immediate and continued employment and ask all questions of all applicants being interviewed. It is also beneficial to phrase questions that can be perceived as being discriminatory or invading privacy differently. For example, instead of asking: 'Do you have reliable childcare?', ask: 'The hours of work for this position may involve shiftwork. Does this suit you?' Of course, if the answer is 'no' to the question, you probably would not consider the applicant for the position.

Before the interview, review the applicant's information and/or resume. This allows you to tailor the interview questions to the applicant and helps with establishing rapport.

How Do You Conduct The Interview?

It is normal for the applicant to be nervous about their interview – try and put them at ease because you will then obtain a more representative sample of what they are really like.

Open the interview with an introduction of yourself and any other interviewers. Talking about something the applicant has an interest in (from their resume) will assist with easing any tension. Before beginning the questions/topics you have prepared, it may also be helpful to encourage the applicant to talk freely and not be too nervous.

There are mainly two ways in which you can conduct the interview. Some interviewers prefer to ask questions in a very structured, set format (called a guided interview), while others prefer to discuss topics flexibly or ask questions in any order (called an unpatterned interview) so that the interview is more like a conversation. While the first method is easier to perform, the second is often used by more experienced interviewers. If both types of interviews contain thorough preparation, however, they should elicit similar information and results.

It is important that, during the interview, you do tell the employee about the job and what it involves. It is recommended that this usually commence at the beginning of the interview. There are two reasons for this: firstly, the applicant has the opportunity to answer the interview questions with some knowledge of the position which may improve their answers; and secondly, it allows the applicant the opportunity to consider whether they are genuinely interested in the position. There is no use conducting the interview and deciding whom you would like your new employee to be if, when they are offered the position, they are unsure whether they would like to take the job.

Many interviewers take notes during the interview. These notes need only be keywords that will 'jog your memory' when you reflect upon the applicant's interview at a later time. Some interviewers may also write more detailed notes from these keywords to keep with the application.

When you have finished asking the interview questions, it is professional to offer the applicant the opportunity to ask questions. This allows them the opportunity to clarify any points about the position and employment conditions (hours, pay, etc). Answer their questions as frankly as possible to ensure they are left with a positive impression of you and your business.

Closing the interview can occur in a number of ways. A popular way to close will include acknowledgement that the interview is over (for example, putting down your pen or pushing back your chair), an indication as to when the selection decision will be made and when you envisage the position beginning. Of course, there are many variations on this process: find one that's right for you!