

# First interviews



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CONSULTING

## FIRST INTERVIEWS

### **Every candidate you offer should meet 3 fundamental criteria:**

1. Can they do the job?
2. Do they want the job?
3. Will they fit in?

Beyond these basic rules, you should accurately rate candidates' skills and abilities against your most important criteria.

And if you have a choice of good people, then you need to be able to assess and benchmark one person against another properly. You need an interviewing framework that enables you to properly identify key skills and achieve consistency when interviewing different people – so that your efforts become focused on predictable hires rather than based on a gut feeling.

### **How many interview stages?**

The level of seniority or complexity of the role should determine how many interview stages you choose to have. For senior/specialist hires you'll need three or more, one of which should be a presentation or role-play scenario. This framework is based on three stages.

In addition to undertaking F2F or video-based interviews, there'll be times when you may wish to speak with candidates on the phone in addition to interviews, which might be a pre-screening exercise or to clarify outstanding issues not covered in meetings.

### **You need to connect with them.**

Throughout the interview process, you need to be cognizant to build rapport and this will ideally develop over several stages so that you end up with a positive relationship... it's no use getting to the end of your recruitment process having perhaps displayed a neutral or lukewarm manner to someone, and then to offer them and expect them to accept!

If someone is an "A" player they probably don't need your job, they're probably well regarded in their existing employment and if they are open to a move, maybe highly sought after.

You need to connect with them. They need to connect with you. This is a two-way responsibility.

## **Prepare an opening statement.**

Set the agenda. You should assume control of the interview from the outset. Thank them for coming in to see you. Tell them that what you'd like to cover is:

- A little bit of insight into the company and the role.
- Then to find out more about them.
- Then to discuss the opportunity in more detail and cover additional questions.

## **Your first question to the candidate.**

Rather than proceed to tell them about your company and the job as you may have just told the candidate (as per the above), instead ask them what they know about your company and the job they are interviewing for.

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“Rather than me tell you things you may already know – why don't you tell me what you know about our company and what your understanding of the job opportunity is”.

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This is a great way to get a quick view of the candidate's qualities and see how prepared the candidates are and, if they have not had the time to research – how quickly they can think on their feet.

If the answer gives you confidence – you will be happy to proceed with a full interview; conversely, if you are unimpressed, you will be better placed to think about keeping the interview short.

## **Interview with a consistent question bank**

You should ask each candidate a common set of crucial questions, and make sure you have properly understood their response and be able to assess their credentials in each questioning area, and record or rate accordingly. For example, a rating of 5 representing excellent and 1 unacceptable.

## Seven questions that you may wish to ask.

1. What is your situation? Or why are you looking, why did you choose to meet with us today?
2. What qualities are you looking for in a new opportunity and how do you wish to develop your career?
3. I'm not interested to understand your entire work history. • What I'd like you to do is to spend 10 minutes telling me: How you came to choose the career path you have chosen, for you to talk me through what you've been doing in the last 5 years and what you've accomplished?
4. This is actually a set of competency-based questions. Tell them you'd like to understand their experience and skills in three key areas, these are the competencies that are most likely to determine success or failure in this role. A good way to ask them is to say: • Can you tell me about a time when you...?
5. What are the types of activities that you do best?
6. Tell me, what motivates you and what types of work do you most like and dislike doing?
7. What questions do you have for me? And AOB?

Questions 3 and 4 should be the ones you spend the most time on. Understand, assuming you anticipate inviting the candidate back in for interview, then at the end of the first interview make a note of what you may wish to cover in any second interview notably things you may not have covered or areas that you'd like to dig into deeper with the candidate.

