

Preparing for Interviewing Potential new Staff

Background:

By now a list of critical experiences and skills will have been established that has influenced the ad written, responses received and subsequent vetting or screening candidates down to a shortlist.

A formal application form and Position Outline has been sent to the short listed applicants that provides an 'out' for anyone who was not entirely serious or upon looking at the role decides it isn't them.

This done the scene is set with an expected short list of motivated applicants who will likely be apprehensive and still determining in themselves 'is this the right thing for me'?

With this in mind it is essential that the interviewer realizes that a poorly conducted interview will disengage potentially excellent people. Conversely the opposite is true. Interviews that enjoy a great tone allow applicants to relax, be themselves and get a glimpse of what life may be like working with / for you. You are on trial as much as they are.

Set the Scene:

Depending on the role the less in the room the better but try to keep the interview time between 30 -40 minutes.

Pointless questions should be avoided like " What have you been up to....?" Anything that is written in both the application and a CV should be referred to demonstrating an effort was made to study the candidate in advance. Put simply

they spent the time preparing an application the panel should at least of studied it. It surprising how many don't.

Many interviewers look for holes, gaps, conspiracies and occasionally find some however the process till now usually flushes out such applicants and such an approach is likely to undermine and create a negative tone.

The ideal way to start is to find an achievement, award .. something in the application that the applicant will feel proud of. eg new child, passed exam, degree, extra curricular achievement – anything that looks interesting.

This safe, acknowledging and comforting start will achieve much higher quality responses. People who feel comfortable tend to be real and drop the stress of 'interview performance'. It is a fallacy in most interviews that it is a reflection of how people will handle their job or cope under pressure.

Interview Questions:

Always stick to the absolute must haves list. Avoid distractions and after creating a warm atmosphere note their obvious experience from the CVs and ask for specific incidences or examples where they handled a particular situation. eg "When you worked in the shoe store how did you handle it when the customer you were with was taking too long to decide and another one was impatiently waiting"?

Thank them for their answer and where appropriate acknowledge them eg " great way to handle that one" and smile.

Avoid 'closed' questions that bring a Yes or No answer.

Outcome:

At the end of this interview there will be a short time for applicants to ask questions but if the interview has gone well they rarely ask. This is not necessarily a reflection of a lack of interest but more an appreciation that the interview has gone well and their 'prepared performance' wasn't required.

The ultimate outcome at this point should be a) this person could fit really well or b) they would be a fish out of water.

A failed interview is one where there remains indifference.

A picture that has helped many is camping at a lake somewhere.

You haven't been there before and your children over a couple of days befriend the children of nearby campers. Both parents respectfully stay their distance for a day or two and eventually the other family you discover have been coming there for years. They invite you over for a BBQ.

After a couple of drinks everyone is relaxed and people are much more frank / real? When you leave to come home you turn to your partner and say

"Let's NOT come back here next year" or "Let's come here again next year".

It is inappropriate to inebriate our candidates but very appropriate to provide a relaxed and safe environment for people to be real and not need to perform.

And Now:

This is when it is good to let them see your world and all of it. If successful they will see it all anyway and so it is best to let them ask other staff questions, look around, see the environment without the manager standing over them. Then spell out the package because until this point the money has remained where it should be. A detail and not a reason (unless graphically out of line). Many people

suddenly become interested or disinterested when the money is brought into play too soon.

If the fit is right both you and the candidate should find a way hopefully to overcome the money.

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