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Before the Interview

Establish a clear description of the essential and non-essential job requirements

Defining the job requirements is a benefit for the interviewer because it sets the parameters for the interview questions. The whole purpose of the interview is to find a candidate who can meet a need within the organization. Defining job requirements also gives everyone involved in the process a clear and standard definition of what to be looking for. The question is how you define a need within an organization. Needs can be focused on the candidate's ability to perform tasks. They can also be focused on the candidate's ability to communicate and relate to others for obtaining buy-in or motivating toward goals.

Prepare a list of questions that relate to job responsibilities

Create open-ended questions that relate to the position in question. Job responsibilities are both functional task performance and relational team performance. Include behavior- and scenario-based questions, demonstration of skills and a simulation of problem solving. Avoid trite, over-used questions that prompt people to lie or give a well-rehearsed answer. Asking someone where they want to be in five years or their greatest weakness encourages fabrication. Ask questions that drive for facts instead. Questions should drive toward competency of task performance and relational team cooperation.

***Important: Use the same questions for all applicants in the same position.**

Create a scorecard for the interview

Something as simple as a number or letter grade for each question will allow you to look back at your initial thoughts and generate an opinion of the interview. Numbers or letters are fine for task performance skills. Relational skills can better be described as a position or range of location on a continuum.

Designate who will be conducting interviews

Conduct interviews with more than one person but in most cases, it is best to establish limits about how many interviewers are involved. Varied opinions are important, but too many participants can lead to gridlock.

Some organizations favor a team or collaborative approach to interviewing. In these instances, typical participants would include the HR manager or recruiter, the candidate's potential supervisor, and two or three other people who are well versed in the job requirements.

- Designate clear roles for participants. A common scenario is two interviewers. One being the primary interviewer and one being the note taker. In larger groups, each member might be assigned a different goal during the interviewing process. For example, one might focus on skills and expertise, another might focus on probing for cultural fit.
- No matter how many interviewers you decide upon, be sure to use the same interviewing team for all candidates for the same position.

Review potential Illegal and discriminatory questions

Before any interviews are conducted, ensure that all interviewers are well-versed in what they can and cannot ask in an interview and what topics should be avoided. Review a list of discriminatory areas as outlined by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC): The EEOC prohibits discrimination based on: **age; disability; national origin; citizenship; family or marital status; pregnancy; race and color; religion;** and **sex,** including gender identity and sexual orientation.

You can't ask about alcohol or drug use, but you can require a drug test as part of the background screening hiring process. You can't ask about an arrest record, but a background search will indicate whether the candidate was convicted.

- **You may ask:** if a candidate is legally permitted to work in the US; if a candidate can fulfill job responsibilities; if the candidate can work the required hours; and if they are of the minimum age to perform the job (usually 18).

Review Resume

Familiarize yourself with the applicant by reviewing their resume. The resume paints the picture of what the candidate considers their best attributes. Review for qualifications that meet the position's essential functions. Look for red flags, errors and inconsistencies.

Establish the time and location for the interview

Establish a time and a place for the interview and notify all involved. Designate a comfortable, welcoming space for the interview that will offer privacy and minimal distractions. Consider the interview as a business meeting, extend the same courtesy you would to a client. Have a room set aside, with chairs for everyone. Make preparations about who will greet the applicant upon arrival and escort to the room where the interview will take place.