

Employee Selection: Making the Most Out of the Interview

Good employees stand out. They make a difference. They are committed to the goals of the organization. They produce. How do you find employees like this? The answer lies in planning and implementing an effective interview process – one that will identify candidates that have the skills, abilities and values that match the job requirements and your team culture.

Below you will find a summary of some of the general steps that must be taken in order to conduct an effective interview process. While, the list is not exhaustive, it provides a good framework around which to build your selection process. Depending upon your division, additional steps may be required.

Before the Interview



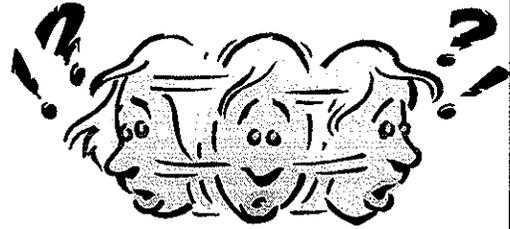
- Update the position job description and make it available to Human Resources.
 - Determine what information will be requested of the applicant in addition to the state application (e.g., cover letter, resume, supplemental questionnaire).
 - Screen applications based on the required and preferred qualifications. Note any special information that makes the applicant stand out in either a positive or negative way. Consider having several individuals review the applications to reach consensus as to who should be screened or interviewed.
 - Review the applications of the finalists again. Make a copy of the application and highlight items that you want to ask about in the interview (e.g., unanswered questions, incomplete or evasive answers). Check for gaps in employment.
- Decide who will be involved in the interview. A team approach allows input from co-workers and close scrutiny of verbal and non-verbal responses. Select team members that “know the job” well or are experienced in certain functional areas of the job (e.g., staff development, budgeting, technology usage). Ask interviewers to block out time. If a team approach will be used, define how the final selection will be made (i.e., supervisor has ultimate authority or team must reach consensus).
 - If multiple interviews will be conducted in one day, allow time between interviews to write notes or debrief with the group.
 - Prepare appropriate interview questions. Ask only questions that are job-related. See the Personnel Pointer in this issue for information on questions that must not be asked.
DO ask questions that:
 - Focus on the competencies that are desired for the position;
 - Are open-ended rather than those that will yield a yes or no response,
 - Relate to the values of NDE and your team (e.g., honesty, accountability for results),
 - Are behavior-based in that they ask about previous behaviors to get an idea of how the applicant might deal with future situations. A couple of examples of behavioral questions follow.
 - Tell me about a situation in which you had to defend a decision you made even though it made you unpopular.
 - Getting the job done sometimes requires being unusually persistent and dedicated to the final goal, especially when faced with obstacles or distractions. Tell me about a time when you were persistent in order to reach a work-related goal.
 - Address both positive and potentially negative situations. For example, “You will be supervising several people. Describe the most difficult person you ever supervised and tell us how you handled the situation.”
 - Develop “benchmark responses” for each question, which are examples of poor (-) average (+) and good (++) answers to the questions.
 - Organize the interview questions so that there is a logical flow to the interview.
 - Provide written information about your team or division so that interview time spent “educating” the applicant is minimized.

During the Interview

- Bring all of the applicant materials to the interview. Remember to include questions that were raised during the review of the materials.
- Begin by providing an overview of the interview format and put the applicant at ease.

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During the Interview (Continued)



- Allow the applicant to do most of the talking. Follow the 80/20 rule.
- Start with broad questions and ask follow-up questions if necessary. Probe when you receive an incomplete response, sense avoidance, need additional information, or do not understand an answer.
- Ask each candidate the same questions and look for consistency of responses.
- Concentrate not only on what is said, but how the applicant says it (e.g., voice volume, speed, pitch, fluency, clarity of thought).
- Observe non-verbal behaviors. Are there certain topics of conversation that cause the applicant to break eye contact, shift his/her body, or hesitate before answering? If an applicant appears uncomfortable with a certain topic, move to a different topic and then raise the issue again. If signs of discomfort are apparent again, probe further.
- Score the applicant responses (poor [-] average [+] and good [++]). Take notes during the interview so you can recall specific responses or behaviors that substantiate your scores.
- Close the interview session. Ask if the applicant has any questions. If the applicant appears to be a good candidate, briefly discuss some of the benefits of working at NDE. Provide information about the next steps in the process.

After the Interview

- Discuss the interview with the interview team, if applicable.
- Retain all interview materials, including notes.
- Check references. Get written approval to release employment-related data, if necessary.
- Conduct background checks, if applicable.
- Make hiring decision.
- Review salary guidelines. Decide on the salary to be offered. Keep in mind the maximum salary that can be offered without additional approval, in case you need to negotiate with the applicant.
- Make a verbal offer.
 - If the offer is not immediately accepted, establish a deadline for the applicant's response.
 - If the offer is refused, ask why.
 - If the offer is accepted, discuss a start date. Advise the applicant that the HR Office will send a formal offer letter. If desired, ask the applicant to respond to the offer in writing.
- Complete and sign the Applicant Flow Sheet for the selected individual and immediately submit it and his/her application materials to HR so that the offer letter can be prepared. The other flow sheets can be completed later.
- Complete and sign the Applicant Flow Sheets for the applicants who were not selected. Submit the flow sheets and all other application documentation to HR within a few days of the hiring finalization. Application documentation includes the application, any supplemental questionnaires, letters, or other documents required of applicants, and any completed EEO surveys not yet forwarded to HR from offices other than NSOB Lincoln. (These forms are sent to Records Management and retained there for three years.)

For assistance with the employee selection process, contact the HR Office.

SOURCES

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