

5 keys to conducting a job interview

If you are a hiring manager, human resources professional or recruiter preparing for an interview, you know the candidate isn't the only one in the room under pressure. With tight budgets, quick turnarounds and constant pressure to produce results, you need to make every question count. With a goal to hire more than just a candidate who interviews well, this is your opportunity to move beyond the one-dimensional picture presented in a resume. Here are five guidelines to help you lead an effective interview.



1. Know what to look for. You need to understand the position you're trying to fill better than anyone. What are the skills required? What is it like to work with the manager? What is the dynamic of the team this person may be joining? What kind of individual would complement the team's skills? What personalities have worked in the past? If you know what to look for going in, it will be easier to evaluate interviewees in real time and have a sense of where they rank afterward.



2. Be unexpected. Once you get past small talk, avoid predictable questions. Instead, frame questions in a way the interviewee can talk about their personal experiences. Instead of "Describe yourself," go with, "Share a challenging experience and how you reacted." Instead of, "How do you like working on a team?" ask, "If you found yourself on a dysfunctional team, what would you do to fix it?" Having the candidate explain how they act will garner a more authentic understanding of their abilities.



3. Follow the rules. Be aware of the legal ramifications of interviews. This means asking absolutely no discriminatory or derogatory questions. If you haven't completed training in this area, be sure to contact your HR partner or a member of your legal department for a review of interview guidelines. And something that's fairly new is [a ban on salary history questions](#).



4. Sell your company. The interview is more than a means to screen applicants; it's also an opportunity to sell the value of your company to a potential employee. Be upfront about the culture and department the candidate is considering. If you find yourself sugarcoating the job, you're only going to ensure an unhappy employee down the line. Highlight the positives. Don't let a superstar candidate walk away from the interview without knowing the upsides of your company.



5. Turn the tables. Leaving time for the candidate to ask questions is a vital element of a great interview. It lets the candidate show, not tell, what really interests them. Questions posed by candidates can reveal what's really on their minds — from salary concerns or worries about working on a team to self-absorption or resistance to authority. On the flip side, candidate questions can also show you how sharp they can be. If you are asked informed questions about organizational structure, market position or competitive threats, you may uncover far more about the candidate's potential to jump in and make an immediate impact.