

I N T E R V I E W E R T R A I N I N G H A N D B O O K

D a t t n e r C o n s u l t i n g , L L C

HANDBOOK OVERVIEW

PART I: SELECTION INTERVIEW OVERVIEW

- Introduction to Interviews
- Multiple Phases of the Selection Interview
- Types of Interviews
- Selection Interview Questions
 - Credentials and Technical Information
 - Experiences
 - Opinions
 - Behavior Descriptions

PART II: ENHANCING THE INTERVIEW

- Preparing for the Interview
- Developing Structure
- Conducting the Interview
- Planning Timing and Logistics
- Questioning Effectively
- Listening Actively
- Using Nonverbal Cues
- Eliminating Errors and Biases
- Legal Considerations
- Closing the Interview

PART I: INTRODUCTION TO INTERVIEWS

- The employment interview has historically been and remains the single most common and important personnel selection tool, despite overwhelming evidence that interviews have low reliability and validity.
- Although the judgments that interviewers make are often highly subjective and not often predictive of a candidate’s job performance, research has shown that there are two ways to enhance the accuracy of interviews:
 - Create a standard, structured interview format for all applicants
 - Train interviewers to be consistent in the way they interview and evaluate candidates

ADVANTAGES

- Useful for determining if applicant has requisite communication or social skills
- Interviewer can obtain supplementary information and ask additional questions where appropriate
- Can assess the applicant’s job knowledge
- Can be used for selection among equally qualified candidates
- Enables the supervisor and/or coworkers to determine if there is “fit”
- Creates an interactive forum for the assessment of interpersonal skills, job-relevant knowledge, and motivation
- Allows the interviewer to “sell” the organization to qualified candidates
- Allows the interviewer to give a realistic and detailed description of the position
- Opportunity to make a favorable impression on applicants not given offers or who opt not to join the organization

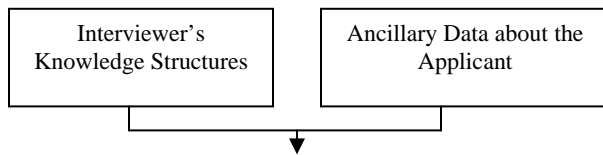
DISADVANTAGES

- Subjective evaluations are made
- Decisions tend to be made within the first few minutes of the interview
- Interviews can lead to less favorable evaluations for women and minorities
- Negative information is weighted more heavily
- Not as reliable or valid as tests
- Poor reliability and consensus between interviewers who:
 - Have unique styles
 - Treat candidates inconsistently
 - Vary in the number of criteria they assess
 - Vary in which criteria they assess
 - Vary in the standards they use
- Poor predictors of job performance
 - Validity for unstructured: 20%
 - Validity for structured: 50%

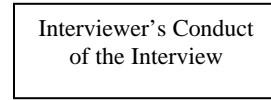
How can an organization maximize the benefits and minimize the risks of interviews?

MULTIPLE PHASES OF THE SELECTION INTERVIEW

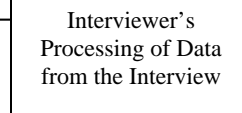
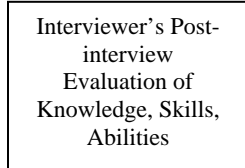
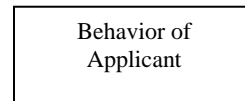
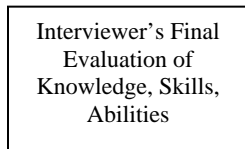
Pre-interview Phase



Interview Phase



Post-interview Phase



TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

Unstructured Interview

Candidates are informally interviewed, and different questions are asked of each applicant.

Behavior Description Interview

Candidates are asked about what they did in prior job situations that are similar to situations they may encounter on the job for which they are being considered. The interviewer may also ask discretionary probing questions for details about the relevant situations, the interviewee's behavior in the situation, and the outcome. The interviewee's responses are then scored with "behaviorally anchored" rating scales developed by job experts.

Situational Interview

Candidates are interviewed about what they would do in various job-related situations. The job-related situations are usually identified using the "critical incidents" job analysis technique. The interviews are then scored using a scoring guide developed by job experts.

Comprehensive Structured Interview

Candidates are asked questions about what they did and/or would do in various job-relevant situations in order to demonstrate their job knowledge, and ability to fulfill worker requirements. This kind of interview assesses how likely it is that the candidate will perform well in all aspects of the job.

Interview Panel

The job candidate gives oral responses to job-related questions asked by a panel of interviewers. Each member of the panel then rates each interviewee on such dimensions as work history, motivation, creative thinking, and presentation. This technique may not be feasible for jobs in which there are a large number of applicants that must be interviewed.

Traditional or Behavior Description Hiring Methods?

- A recent review of published research (over 150 studies) on interviews found one-on-one unstructured interviews averaged only 19% predictive accuracy.
- Unstructured panel interviews only rose to 35% accuracy.
- Research-based behavioral interviews, however, achieved an accuracy of up to 80%- a four-fold improvement.

The best predictor of future performance is past performance in similar situations.

- The more recent the past behavior, the greater its predictive power.
- The more longstanding the behavior, the greater its predictive power.

SELECTION INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- The purpose of the selection interview is to gather information that is specifically relevant to the position for which interviewers are hiring.
- Since interviewers usually get exactly what they ask from their candidates, they need to be careful about how their questions are structured in order to elicit the most useful information.
- There are four types of information gathered in an interview:
 - Credentials and Technical Information
 - Experiences
 - Opinions
 - Behavior Descriptions

CREDENTIALS AND TECHNICAL INFORMATION QUESTIONS

CREDENTIALS questions are an opportunity to obtain information about a person's education, employment history, and past achievements, etc., which is also verifiable through other sources.

For example:

1. What degrees do you hold?
2. What was your major?
3. Do you have a driver's license?
4. What size budget did you manage?
5. How long did you work at your last job?

Advantages

These questions can provide good clues about what the person knows and can do and are useful in the screening process.

Disadvantages

They do not provide information about what a person will choose to do in a given situation.

NOTE: Many questions related to biographical information are illegal. (i.e.: Where were you born? What is your marital status?) See "Legal Considerations" section at the end of this handbook.

TECHNICAL questions determine if a candidate has the technical knowledge necessary to do a job.

For example:

1. How do you write a Microsoft Access query?
2. How do you conduct a job analysis?
3. What costs do you consider while calculating a return on investment (ROI)?

Advantages

Technical questions can provide clues to whether an applicant actually has the knowledge that his/her credentials indicate.

Disadvantages

Although this information is valuable, it may be more economical to collect it in a work sample test. The result of asking technical questions is that one can get a fairly good idea of whether or not the person can do the job.

Make a note of the credentials or technical type of question(s) you usually ask in an interview. Is there a more effective way of getting this information from the candidate? If so, how?

EXPERIENCE QUESTIONS

EXPERIENCE QUESTIONS provide information about what the applicant has done in the past. These are general “work experience” questions and are the most commonly asked questions in interviews.

For example:

1. What were your duties in your last job?
2. Tell me about your responsibilities in your last position.
3. Describe a typical day in your company.
4. What do you do when a customer complains in an unfriendly way?

Advantages

Work experience is important and these questions provide an overview of what the applicant has done in the past. Such questions can be helpful in probing for more specific information about performance.

Disadvantages

By themselves, these questions do not give any information about how well the applicant performed the described task or activity. Even if the candidate did perform the task or activity well in the last situation, it may have involved different behaviors than those required for the new job.

Make a note of the experience type question(s) you usually ask in an interview. Is there a more effective way of getting this information from the candidate? If so, how?

OPINION QUESTIONS

OPINION QUESTIONS yield information that describes what the applicant thinks about a given topic. Opinion questions elicit self-evaluations, self-reports of strengths/weaknesses, likes/dislikes, and goals.

For example:

1. Describe your strengths and weaknesses.
2. Why are you applying for a job here?
3. What do you like best about your job?
4. What do you think is the most important part of your job?
5. How do you feel about working overtime?

Advantages

Opinion questions reveal areas where the interviewer can seek more specific behavioral information. They provide information about what the applicant thinks is important and allow for further probing relevant to the job opening.

Disadvantages

Interviewers may end up making assumptions about the candidate's behavior as a result of the answers to opinion questions. They do not provide any real evidence about what the candidate currently does, or would do in the specific position for which he/she is being interviewed.

*Make a note of the opinion-type question(s) you usually ask in an interview.
Is there a more effective way of getting this information from the candidate? If so, how?*

BEHAVIOR DESCRIPTION QUESTIONS

BEHAVIOR DESCRIPTION QUESTIONS request detailed accounts of specific events from the applicant's past.

For Example:

1. Please describe a specific technical challenge that challenged your technical skills.
2. Tell me about the most difficult client you faced last year. How did you prepare? How did you respond to the client's concerns?
3. Think about a time when you noticed the early warning signs of a problem which would have been costly if not detected. When did you first notice the problem? What was the first thing you did to correct it?

Advantages

The information obtained from these questions allows the interviewer more objectively to assess applicant accomplishments and competencies, yielding more accurate hiring decisions.

Disadvantages

Behavior Description interviews are time consuming. Interviewers also require more skill and effort to ask and score these types of questions well.

Make a note of the Behavior Description type question(s) you usually ask in an interview. Is there a more effective way of getting this information from the candidate? If so, how?

PART II: ENHANCING THE INTERVIEW

As an interviewer, you are given the very important task of helping your organization select new members. The more accurate you are in your predictions of who will be a successful employee, the more successful your organization will be.

Best Practices:

- Preparing for the Interview
- Developing Structure
- Conducting the Interview
- Planning Timing and Logistics
- Questioning Effectively
- Listening Actively
- Using Nonverbal Cues
- Eliminating Errors and Biases
- Legal Considerations
- Closing the Interview

PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW

ADVANCED PREPARATION is crucial to any interviewing process. Without it, your interview could be disorganized and unfocused. The following steps are suggested:

- Clearly define the position and competencies necessary for successful performance in the position.
- Prepare an interview strategy.
- Decide in advance how you are going to keep a record of the interview i.e. note taking or tape recording.

POSITION DESCRIPTION AND ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

DESCRIBING THE ROLE AND THE SELECTION CRITERIA must happen in the earliest stages of the interview process:

- Level of performance expected
- Knowledge and skills
- Attitudes and feelings
- Special qualifications for to the position

The above are criteria that are intended to ensure that interviews will be valid and fair for all candidates. If used consistently, criteria provide your organization with a uniform yardstick against which each interviewee can be objectively and fairly measured.

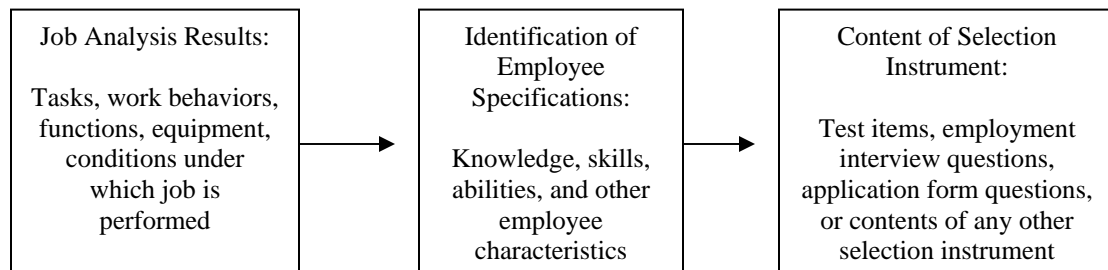
Principal role of Job Analysis is:

- To assess job content so that knowledge, skills, abilities, and other requisite employee specifications can be identified
- To develop selection measures such as tests, interviews, and work samples to asses knowledge, skills and abilities

Job Analysis

Employee Specifications

Selection Instrument Development



- One way to establish criteria is study the job specifications and determine the abilities, skills and competencies, and personal attributes necessary for performing all specified job functions
- Another way is to talk to job incumbents or other employees who know what it takes to do the job well

RECORDING ANSWERS

ACCURATE RECORDS of candidate responses are a critical input when interviewers synthesize the data to make a hiring decision. There are two effective alternatives:

Audio Cassette Recording

Pros:

- Provides a clear record of responses that can be reviewed later
- Allows the interviewer to listen more effectively during the interview
- Provides objective evidence of an applicant's responses should the interviewer ever have to testify in a court case

Cons:

- May cause initial discomfort for the applicant in some cases
- Can increase the time required during assessment if the tape needs to be reviewed in order for the interviewer to rate responses

Best Practices:

- Alert the candidate to the recorder and obtain his/her permission to tape the session.
- Inform the candidate of how the recording will be used and who may listen to it.

Note Taking

Pros:

- Focuses assessment of applicant answers on critical points in an efficient way
- Provides a record of questions asked and answered during the interview

Cons:

- Increases the possibility of missing key details
- Taking detailed notes may slow down the interview

Best Practices:

- Take notes throughout the interview or not at all in order to avoid shaping responses.
- Do not take notes on just things that you view to be negative or positive.
- Take notes that are descriptive and not evaluative and avoid jumping to conclusions.
- Give stories a label and write down key words to facilitate subsequent recall.
- Note the frequency and recency of behaviors when possible.

DEVELOPING STRUCTURE

STRUCTURE enables interviewers to work easily and comprehensively through a candidate’s credentials and history. For example:

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Greeting and small talk 2. Transition Statement 3. Overview 4. Educational Background 5. Work History 6. Job-Related Outside Activities 7. Self-Assessment 8. Firm and Job Information/ Q & A 9. Further Action/Close 	<p>Establish rapport Direct the conversation to the interview Let the candidate know how you plan to conduct the interview. Verify degrees, coursework, etc., given on the resume and/ or application form. Explore all work experience. Collect data chronologically Ask questions about work-related activities such as clubs, hobbies, and volunteer work. Adhere to EEO guidelines. Ask for candidate’s assessment of his or her strengths and weaknesses Give relevant information about the job and the firm. Answer candidate’s questions. Sell the job as appropriate. Outline next steps in your firm’s decision-making process. Thank candidate and close.</p>
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The structure will vary depending on whether the interview is a one-on-one or a panel interview.

The following should be kept in mind regarding panel interviewing:

- Panel interviewing saves time, builds team consensus and buy-in, and sends a message to candidates regarding the importance of team collaboration in the workplace.
- A decision is based on the opinions of several people and therefore less subjective.
- Make sure that the participation of panel members is equal and that no single member dominates the interview.
- The roles of team interviewing should be based on the skills, knowledge, and abilities of individual team members.
- Identify who will be the lead interviewer; who will moderate the structure, flow, and time of each interview.

Before the panel interview:

- Identify members of the interview team and schedule a team meeting (this activity is typically performed by the lead interviewer):
 - Draft a distribute a memo to team members regarding the meeting
 - Attach a copy of the position description
 - Attach a copy of the candidate’s resume
- Lead or participate in the interview team meeting
 - As a group determine which person will handle specific areas and probe questions during the interview
 - Draw up a schedule of interviewing times

- The lead interviewer needs to send a reminder to the interview team several days before the interview
 - Attach a list of areas to probe
 - Attach an interview appraisal form
- Review the position description, competencies, and candidate's resume
- Develop a list of probing questions related to your company's areas to probe
 - Make sure the questions do not violate EEO guidelines
- Gather the materials that will be needed during the interview, including:
 - Note taking form
 - Interview appraisal form
 - Business card

NOTE: It is important to not overwhelm a candidate with multiple interviewers firing questions without some sense of sequence or coordination between panelists.

CONDUCTING THE INTERVIEW

CONDUCT in the first few moments of an interview is vitally important. This is when initial impressions (of both interviewer and candidate) are formed.

Initial Contact

People make very quick judgments about one another when they first meet. Ideally, you should give applicants as similar an experience as possible of being greeted and brought to the room for the interview. This will enable more accurate comparison of candidates than would be possible if different interviews begin differently. A few words of small talk, for example, about directions or travel to the interview location, will set the candidate at ease.

CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

Be aware of cultural differences when greeting interviewees: in some cultures, men greet each other with an embrace; in others, men and women alike simply bow. The handshake, in various forms, is the most universally accepted and generally the safest option.

THE IMPORTANCE OF ESTABLISHING RAPPORT

Create a positive rapport with the candidate by standing up to greet him/ her. Lean toward the candidate and make appropriate eye contact. This encourages candidates to relax.

Please describe how you plan to consistently greet candidates and begin interviews.

Using a Structuring Statement

A structuring statement is a clear statement that lets an applicant know what will happen in the interview and puts him/her at ease. A good structuring statement should include:

- A brief background about your experience with the company
- The position, title, and department for which the candidate is being interviewed
- The amount of time required for the interview and what you want to accomplish in that time
- Mention of your note-taking or tape-recording process
- An explanation of the nature of the questions that will be asked

Give an example of a structuring statement that you use while interviewing candidates.

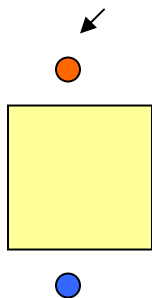
PLANNING TIMING AND LOGISTICS

TIMING AND LOGISTICS require preparation and sets the tone for the ensuing interview.

The following diagrams illustrate some seating arrangements for the interview process.

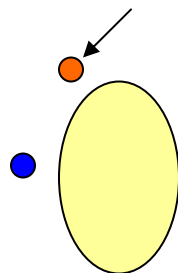
Key: ● interviewer ● candidate

Face-to-face suggests formality



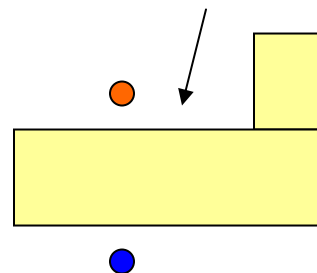
Formal Interview

Side-by-side implies cooperation



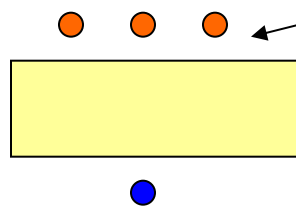
Informal Interview

Meeting at a workspace creates relaxed atmosphere



Interview in your office

Panel sits in line facing the candidate



Panel Interview

Best Practices:

- Make alternative dates and times available for holding interviews in case candidates are unable to attend on suggested days.
- Schedule interviews with a generous amount of time between them.
- Interviews should be conducted in quiet places, free from interruption.
- Try to avoid sitting behind a desk.

What space and set-up do you use and what impact does it have on the candidate?

QUESTIONING EFFECTIVELY

QUESTIONS—the variety and precision—are vital in determining the success of the information exchange between you and each candidate. There are seven different types of questions:

Open-Ended

- Solicits broad, opinion-based, direct responses
- Allows respondent to take initiative in answering as they see appropriate
- Provides valuable insights regarding the candidate’s priorities, style, thought processes, etc.
- Example: “How have your previous jobs prepared you for greater responsibilities?”

Closed-Ended

- Seeks verification of information by narrowing the choice of answers to either yes or no
- You can recognize closed-ended questions by the first words of the sentence:
 - Are you/ Were you...?
 - Do you/ Did you...?
 - Can you/ Could you...?
- Example: “Have you performed this type of work before?”
- Use a closed-ended question when you’ve targeted a point of information: “Did you intend to complete the requirements for the master’s program?” “How many employees did you supervise?”

Probing

- Seeks more information on previous statements
- Considers whether candidates have answered a question to your satisfaction. If not, continue probing
- Example: “Could you please say more about your team leadership role?”

Paraphrasing:

- Mirrors the content and feelings of what the candidate is saying in your own words
- Example: “Let me see if I understood what you were saying about...”

Direct:

- Asks for specific information on a defined topic.
- Directs the candidate's answers to a narrow focus for evaluating knowledge, skills, and abilities.
- Example: "What do you find challenging about supervising a design team?"

Problem-solving:

- Describes a hypothetical or real scenario to check for common understanding and knowledge from respondents.
- Asks for an explanation of how a situation would be handled.
- Example: "How would you handle an irate customer?"

Behavioral Description and Follow-up Probes

- Behaviorally based interview questions should focus on a candidate's past behavior, and should include coverage of the situation, what the candidate did, and what the result was.
- A behavior description interview is a new experience for most selection candidates
- The candidate may be unprepared because they are not used to talking so descriptively about themselves and their personal accomplishments
- Interviewers also need to be sensitive to the varied cultural backgrounds of the candidates which may impact the extent to which candidates provide detailed descriptions to the interviewer
- Thinking of experiences takes time and energy
- Example:
 - “Please describe a situation where you had to use influence to achieve a goal.
 - Why was influence necessary?
 - What was your strategy for using influence?
 - What obstacles did you encounter?
 - How effective were you in influencing?”

LISTENING ACTIVELY

ACTIVE LISTENING is one of the most essential abilities of an interviewer. Consider:

- Summarize what a candidate is saying to show that you are listening.
- Keep checking with the candidate that you have understood everything you have been told.
- Be curious. It helps you listen properly.
- Ensure you understand a candidate's question before answering.
- Jot down questions as they occur to you.
- Listen to the emotions behind the words.
- Correct any bad listening habits that you have.
- Keep a check on your body language.

Develop listening skills to facilitate effective interviews:

Physical Listening Signals

- Look at the candidate
- Sit upright; vary your posture
- Smile occasionally
- Use gestures
- Be yourself

Conversational Listening Dialogue

Listening dialogue techniques have 3 benefits:

- Keep your active listening level high
- Gives the interview a conversational tone
- Encourages the candidates to provide more and better information.

Incorporate conversational listening techniques:

- Comment occasionally
- Echo significant words or phrases
- Rephrase for understanding, clarification, or summarization

Commenting: an added statement of your own to what the candidate has just said. Keep the comment brief and relevant to the same subject

Interviewer: Why did you choose this as your career path?

Candidate: I got interested in this subject when I was in college

Comment: I also got interested in this field while in college

Candidate: Yes- I feel fortunate to have discovered my interest when I was still in school and could take relevant courses.

The benefit of the interviewer's comment is threefold:

- The questioning remains conversational
- The interviewer demonstrates active listening
- Candidate presents in greater detail his/ her career orientation

Echoing: a listening dialogue technique by which you repeat verbatim a key word or phrase the candidate said.

Interviewer: Why are you leaving your current job?

Candidate: I can't see much of a growth potential. My boss is sort of standing in the way.

Echo back: Standing in the way?

Candidate: Yes. He seems to keep all the credit for himself so I don't get much visibility.

By echoing back a selected word/ phrase, you encourage the candidate to contribute additional information. This serves as a very subtle probe and also shows that you are listening actively.

Rephrasing: a restatement of the candidate's thought using different words.

Interviewer: Why are you changing careers?

Candidate: I love teaching but the pay isn't enough.

Rephrase: So you feel intrinsically rewarded but not adequately extrinsically rewarded.

Candidate: No matter how hard I work, my paycheck stays the same. I want to be rewarded for my extra efforts

By recapturing the candidate's thoughts in other words, the interviewer demonstrates that he/she not only heard the response but also understood it.

USING NONVERBAL CUES

NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION shapes the tone and direction of the interview. In particular, interviewers need to make sure that they do not send negative nonverbal signals during the interview. These might include:

- Looking away from the candidate
- Looking at your watch often
- Watching people walking by
- A bored facial expression
- Slumping or restlessly shifting in your chair

However, interviewers also need to be on guard that they do not send too many positive nonverbal signals, as these may shape candidates' responses.

Appropriate nonverbal cues include:

- Eye contact with the candidate
- A friendly but not overly relaxed posture
- An alert facial expression

You should use nonverbal cues to indicate general attention and interest, but not to punish or reward any specific thing that a candidate says.

Lastly, different cultures have different norms of body language and personal space. Where some people are open and tactile even with strangers, others feel discomfort if you sit or stand too closely.

ELIMINATING ERRORS AND BIASES

ERRORS AND BIASES corrupt interview validity. As interviewers, you need to be aware of common errors and biases in interview evaluations.

- Leniency Error: all candidate's are rated superior
- Central Tendency Error: all candidates are rated as average
- Stringency Error: all candidates are rated as poor
- Contrast Effect: the impression of the previous candidate influences the evaluation of the current candidate
- First Impression Error: evaluations are based on the first impression of the candidate
- "Similar-to-me-Error": evaluations are favorable because candidate is similar in some way(s) to the interviewer

Guarding against error and bias:

- Treat each area of inquiry in an interview independently and make no assumptions about performance
- Review the objective rating standards for each question before the interview
- Review the final rating profile of an applicant; if you see a large number of high or low ratings, or large number of ratings in the middle (for example, too many "3"s), and limited variance, you may want to consider whether errors and biases are the reason for this pattern.

LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

THE LAW describes appropriate and inappropriate interview protocol. In general, one should only ask job-relevant questions and questions which do not probe about irrelevant information about an applicant's personal life, personal history or membership in any demographic group or protected class.

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) legal and illegal questions:

- Age
 - Illegal: How old are you? When did you graduate from high school?
 - Legal: None

- Race or national origin
 - Illegal: What is your race? Where were you born?
 - Legal: None

- Citizenship
 - Illegal: Are you an American citizen?
 - Legal: Can you document your right to work in the United States?

- Religion
 - Illegal: What is your religion? Do you attend church/synagogue/mosque?
 - Legal: None

- Marital status
 - Illegal: Are you married? Have you ever been married? What was your maiden name? What kind of work does your husband/wife do?
 - Legal: None

- Family status
 - Illegal: Where do you live? Who do you live with? Do you have children? How many? How old are they? Who takes care of them? Are you pregnant? Do you plan to have children?
 - Legal: Are there any factors, which would prevent you from meeting your work obligations or getting to work on time?

- Disabilities and health
 - Illegal: Do you have any disabilities or health problems?
 - Legal: Can you fulfill the essential functions of the job?

- Arrest record
 - Illegal: Have you ever been arrested?
 - Legal: Have you ever been convicted of a (relevant) crime?

CLOSING THE INTERVIEW

CLOSE interviews with a clear statement to the candidate about next steps. Your closing statement should include:

- Thanking the applicant for his or her time
- What next steps will be – e.g.: further interviews, a meeting of the hiring committee, etc.
- The time frame before next steps
- When the applicant will next hear from the organization

Please write a brief closing statement for discussion.

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