

ADVICE FOR CLIENTS

CONDUCTING PROFESSIONAL INTERVIEWS

Once you have a shortlist of potential candidates, the next step is interviews. As you only have a short amount of time to meet and make a decision about each candidate's suitability for your role, asking the right interview questions is really important.

Depending on the requirements of the role, your interview should include a good mix of questions to assess and easily compare each candidate. Devise a range of both unstructured interview questions and competency based interview questions, and create a score sheet to measure them.

Many of our clients ask us for advice on how to conduct professional and thorough interviews. Every company, every role and every candidate is different, so it's about finding a style that works for you. But however you approach interviews, the key thing is to understand exactly what you are looking for at the outset, and ensure you ask questions that allow you to compare candidates against one another on the person specification and job description you have identified.

Here are our tips on conducting professional interviews:

(1) Identify key requirements and competencies for the role

What attributes does the successful candidate need to have? Think about personality traits and skills – leadership, teamwork etc – as well as relevant experience. You may think you want someone “from a legal background” but would you also consider a fast learner who has performed well in a similar role but a different industry?

(2) Work out a scoring system

Many people recruit on gut instinct. This can work well for assessing whether a candidate would fit into your existing company culture. But it often leads to bias, with managers recruiting people they like, or are like them, rather than building a diverse mixed team of people with complementary (but different) skills and attributes. To compare each candidate fairly, it is a good idea to devise a scoring matrix that you can use to score candidates on their answers during the interview.

(3) Make candidates feel secure and at ease

Most candidates feel nervous before an interview. Nerves can prevent candidates from performing to the best of their abilities, giving an unrealistic picture of how well they would perform on the job. Make an effort to ensure every candidate feels at ease before the interview starts. You can do this through general conversation, making them laugh, asking about their journey or talking about something funny that has just happened – anything to put them at ease.

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(4) Mix of normal and competency based interview questions

There are two main styles of interview questions. 'Normal' (also called unstructured) interview questions like 'what can you bring to this role' are open ended and used to build up a general impression of a candidate. 'Competency based' (also called structured, behavioural, skills based or situational) interview questions are designed to assess a candidate's performance in a specific skill or competency, such as their ability to deal with difficult situations and stress, or work as part of a team. In answer to competency-based questions, candidates should give an example of a situation they've encountered in the past, explain what they were asked to do and how they did it, and then evaluate the outcome.

(5) Ask about future career aspirations

Asking where a candidate sees themselves in five or ten years time can give you an insight into their future career ambitions. For highly qualified candidates, it could give you an indication that they only intend to stay in the role for a short amount of time. You may also gain an understanding of a candidate's desire to learn, develop and achieve in the role, and their expectations about training and development opportunities.

(6) Attitude and aptitude over experience

It is tempting to ask for a specific list of qualifications and experience. But this can only tell you how a candidate has performed in the past. If you instead recruit for attitude and aptitude, you won't miss out on outstanding candidates that haven't had the opportunity to prove themselves yet in your industry, but who display great potential and enthusiasm for the role.

(7) Importance of good feedback

When you have chosen your successful candidate, it is easy to forget about giving good feedback to the unsuccessful ones. However, if a candidate has made it to interview, they will likely have invested a significant amount of time into applying for the job. It is therefore courteous to give them some constructive feedback about their performance to help them in future. Not only is it polite, but giving good feedback can have a big impact on your brand image and your ability to recruit good candidates in the future. People talk about their experiences of companies to their friends and colleagues, so ensure all candidates have a great experience of dealing with you and you're more likely to attract great applicants in the future.

All CLD Recruitment clients benefit from our highly tailored and personalised service, which includes full interview support. We will work with you to find and select the best possible candidate who will make a real difference in your business long term.

To find out more and discuss your requirements, call 0113 829 3380 or visit www.cldrecruitment.co.uk/why-choose-us

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