
Effective Interviewing Guide

Selecting the right candidates takes time, energy, and patience.

Now that you have shortlisted candidates for an interview, here are some tips to help you create the best interview experience for both the candidate and the interviewers.

Job Interviews should run between 30 and 60 minutes depending on the seniority and complexity of the role.

Remember it's time for the candidate to do most of the talking – not the interviewer. Set the scene with a few comments at the beginning of the interview, use well-designed questions to delve into the skills and behaviours you want to explore, and let the applicants do the rest.

Asking the Right Questions

Four questions that should always be asked in an interview:

1. Why are you leaving your current job? – Find out an applicant's motivation.
2. What do you know about our business? – This question checks whether an applicant is serious about applying and how much preparation they've done.
3. What are the specific things that triggered your interest in this role? – Find out if the applicant is genuinely interested or if it's just a place-filler until they find their dream job.
4. What kind of leader or manager do you like to work for, and why? – You are looking for the right fit with your culture and your team. Asking this question helps you work out how this person likes to be managed, and whether you can lead them.

It is also important to ensure that you don't ask the wrong questions. Check out the Client Interview Guidelines for what you can and cannot ask during the recruitment process.

Behavioural Interview Questions

Using behavioural based interview questions allows you to learn about the candidate's past behaviour and performance in certain situations. This helps you predict how they are likely to perform with your company.

Behavioural questions typically start with 'Tell me about a time when you...' Encourage the candidate to tell you about an actual experience they have had. If they can't give you a specific answer it may be a sign that they do not have direct experience in what you are asking them about.

From the Position Description, identify the specific job accountabilities, skills and competencies required, and align interview questions against each one. Use the Topic sections in the attached Interview Template for this purpose. Candidates should be evaluated against these elements at interview.

Be sure to use the same questions for each candidate interviewed for the same position to ensure consistency when assessing their suitability.

Preparing to Interview Applicants

Consider who should be involved. We recommend involving at least two (2) and no more than three (3) on the 'panel' including the direct Supervisor/Manager of the role and a HR person if possible.

Allocate a private space and timeframe for your interview and provide a water jug and glasses.

Prepare your interview questions in advance and make sure each interviewer has a copy to make notes on. We have given you an Interview Template to assist you in designing your interviews.

Be prepared to answer specific questions about the role. Have the following information at your fingertips:

- Position Description
- Salary/Wages, Benefits and Conditions of Employment
- Hours/Days of work, rosters, flexibility options
- Interview Template
- Any company information, e.g., Product Brochures, Annual Report (dependent on the role).

Post Interview Evaluations

Allow time (10-15 minutes) at the end of each interview to evaluate candidates against each question in your interview and debrief with others on the panel. It is best to do this before your next interviewee is scheduled so they don't 'blur' together.

A point system can be used to evaluate how well each applicant meets the criteria. Suggested scoring: 5 = Excellent, 4 = Above Average, 3 = Average (meets criteria), 2 = Below Average (generally does not meet criteria), and 1 = Unacceptable (significantly below criteria).

Putting this 'math' into the process can help you assess a candidate across all areas of the role. It is easy to be swayed by an interviewee who is exceptionally good at interviewing or seems to be a 'really nice' person. Taking the time to assess their answers against what you need in the role means you will be looking at the whole picture.

Trust Your Gut

We have heard countless stories of Managers who have hired someone because they looked good on paper, even though they didn't get a good feeling during the interview. Similarly, we have had numerous experiences of 'knowing' that a particular candidate is the right person for the job within the first few minutes of meeting them.

At Focus HR we are a huge believer in 'trusting your gut' and, if you use the hints, tips, and tools that we provide you, you will likely find the basis for that gut instinct.