

EMPLOYMENT INTERVIEWING AND SEARCH COMMITTEE BEST PRACTICES

Staff Development Workshop

KEY TO SUCCESSFUL INTERVIEWS - SITUATIONAL/BEHAVIORAL QUESTIONS

- ◉ Situation (Tell me about a time...)
- ◉ Action (What did you do?)
- ◉ Response/Outcome (What was the result?)

FORMULA FOR ASKING STRONG QUESTIONS

- Past performance and behavior predicts future performance and behavior
- *“Tell me about a time when you had to _____ . What did you do about it? What was the outcome?”*
- **Even better:** Ask about a challenging situation
- **Better yet:** Ask follow up questions to clarify understanding
 - Don't assume

ONE EXAMPLE

- ⦿ **No!** *“Have you ever repaired car engines?”*
- ⦿ **Good:** *“Tell me about a time when you had to repair a car engine. What was the problem? What did you do to repair it? What was the outcome?”*
- ⦿ **Better:** *“Tell me about a time when you had to repair a car engine and you couldn’t figure out what was wrong? Why was it challenging? What did you do? What was the outcome?”*

ANOTHER EXAMPLE

- ⦿ **No!** *“Have you ever trained people?”*
- ⦿ **Good:** *“Tell me about a time when you had to train someone how to perform a new task? How did you approach it? What was the outcome?”*
- ⦿ **Better:** *“Tell me about the most challenging experience you had trying to teach someone to do something new and different? Why was it challenging? How did you approach it? What was the outcome?”*

BEWARE OF FLUFF!

- ⦿ “As a supervisor with 20 years of experience, I’ve trained hundreds of people to do new and different things. Some people learn quickly and others more slowly, but I help everyone learn how to do what they need to do. I’m a really good trainer.”
- ⦿ Is this a good answer?

SO WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN YOU GET FLUFF?

- Redirect and ask again
- “It’s wonderful that you’ve trained so many people. I need you to provide me with **one specific example**. Tell me about the most challenging experience you had trying to teach someone to do something new and different? Why was it challenging? How did you approach it? What was the outcome?”

WHAT IF THE PERSON HAS NEVER DONE WHAT YOU'RE ASKING?

- ⦿ First off, it's good to know -- honesty matters
- ⦿ Ask about something similar that they might have done
- ⦿ “Thank you for letting me know that you've never trained someone to do something new on the job. I see that you recently completed your bachelor's degree. Tell me about a time when you helped a fellow student learn something new or understand how to do something difficult? How did you approach it? What was the outcome?”

HOW DO YOU KNOW WHAT TO ASK?

- Four areas to focus on in every interview:
 - Technical skills
 - Teaming skills
 - Leadership skills
 - Student centered behaviors
- Need balanced number of questions addressing all four areas

PLANNING YOUR QUESTIONS

- Think about:
 - What are the most critical aspects of the job?
 - What does the person need to know?
 - What does the person need to do?
 - Who will the person be interacting with?
- Look at the job description
 - Update the job description if necessary

KNOW SPECIFICALLY WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR

- ◉ If you can't describe it, you won't know it when you find it, and ***you might hire the wrong person!***
- ◉ Make sure that the whole interview team understands and agrees on what is most important
- ◉ Past behavior predicts future performance

WHO SHOULD BE ON THE SEARCH COMMITTEE / INTERVIEW TEAM?

- Diversity matters!
 - Race/National Origin
 - Gender
 - Age
 - Position
 - Faculty
 - Staff
 - Student

FIRST CONTACT - PHONE SCREEN

- Explain the interview process to candidates. For example:
 - “We’re going to conduct phone interviews with 10-12 candidates”
 - “We hope to invite four candidates in for in-person interviews”
 - “The interviews will be panel interviews - you will meet with two groups of 6-10 people”
 - “We hope to identify two finalists who we’ll invite back for additional interviews. Finalists will be asked to make a 30 minute presentation to about 25 people who will also ask you questions about yourself”
 - “We hope to have a decision and make an offer by (date)”
 - “We hope to have the person start around (date). Would that work for you?”
 - “The pay range for this position is _____. Would that be acceptable to you?”
 - (For out of town candidates) “We do/don’t offer relocation assistance for this job. Our relocation package includes _____. Would that be acceptable for you?”
 - “You can learn more about our campus and SUNY benefits online. I’ll email you the link.”

FIRST CONTACT - PHONE SCREEN

(CONTINUED)

- ◉ “Let me tell you about the job”
 - Clear overview, don’t sugar coat
- ◉ “What questions do you have about the job?”
- ◉ “We are going to be asking behavioral/situational questions at every step of the interview process. The questions will ask you to describe a situation you have encountered, tell us what was challenging about the situation, tell us how you handled the situation and what the outcome was. If your answer doesn’t include all of this information, we’ll ask follow up questions to ensure we get the information we need.”
- ◉ “Now we have five questions to ask you...”
 - Plan your questions ahead of time
 - Ask tough “deal breaker” questions right away
 - Focus on the most critical skills and competencies a qualified candidate needs to have
- ◉ “Do you have any questions for us?”
- ◉ “Thank you for your time. We’ll get back to you by _____.”

BUYER BEWARE

- ⦿ Beware of candidates who have no (or few) questions!
- ⦿ Beware of job hoppers!
 - There are reasons people change jobs frequently
 - Be sure to ask why they left each job and what their supervisor would say about them - good and bad
- ⦿ Don't fear the unemployed
 - But do ask and understand what really happened
- ⦿ Pay attention and respond to body language, tone, vague/evasive answers and “too good to be true” answers

IN PERSON INTERVIEW

- ◉ Plan your questions ahead of time
- ◉ Plan who will ask the questions
- ◉ Plan who will be listening for fluffy answers and asking follow up questions
- ◉ Explain behavioral/situational interview questions again:
 - “We are going to be asking behavioral/situational questions. The questions will ask you to describe a situation you have encountered, tell us what was challenging about the situation, tell us how you handled the situation and what the outcome was. If your answer doesn’t include all of this information, we’ll ask follow up questions to ensure we get the information we need.”
- ◉ Make sure you’re asking different questions at each step of the process
- ◉ Each person should be taking notes

IN PERSON INTERVIEW

(CONTINUED)

- Don't be tempted to ask “illegal” questions
 - For example...
 - “Where is that accent from?”
 - “What do you do outside of work?”
 - “Who looks after your kids when they get out of school?”
- Describe the job (again)
 - Warts and all!
- Describe pay and relocation (again)
- Leave time for the candidate's questions
 - Beware of candidates who have no (or few) questions!
- “Thank you for your time. We'll get back to you by _____.”

PRESENTATIONS

- Give the candidate a real life (job related) example, situation or task to discuss.
- Tell the audience ahead of time to ask behavioral/situational questions
- Identify a facilitator who can rephrase fluffy audience questions or follow up on fluffy/vague answers
- Evaluate:
 - Well prepared?
 - Articulate?
 - Knowledgeable?
 - Engaging?

WHAT ABOUT INTERNAL CANDIDATES?

- ◉ Treat internal and external candidates the same
 - Same questions
 - Same process
- ◉ “I realize it may be awkward for you to be asked questions as if you were a stranger, but we’re going to be asking you the same questions as every other candidate. You need to answer the questions as though I (we) don’t know you and your work.”
- ◉ “We are going to be asking behavioral/situational questions. The questions will ask you to describe a situation you have encountered, tell us what was challenging about the situation, tell us how you handled the situation and what the outcome was. If your answer doesn’t include all of this information, we’ll ask follow up questions to ensure we get the information we need.”

DECISIONS, DECISIONS

- ⦿ Identify the most critical job requirements
- ⦿ Review each candidate's answers (not resume) against the criteria
- ⦿ Identify strengths and gaps for each person
- ⦿ Identify the most qualified candidate
 - Not the nicest or “the devil you know”

COMPARING CANDIDATES

	Candidate A Strengths	Candidate A Gaps	Candidate B Strengths	Candidate B Gaps	Candidate C Strengths	Candidate C Gaps
Technical Skills						
Teaming Skills						
Leadership						
Student Focus						
Presentation Skills						
Candidate's Questions						

WHAT IF NONE OF THE CANDIDATES ARE PARTICULARLY GOOD?

- ⦿ Back to the drawing board
 - Don't settle!
- ⦿ Networking / cold calls
 - LinkedIn, professional contacts, etc.
 - Do you know anyone who might be interested?
- ⦿ HR can help you identify alternate candidate sources

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

- ◉ Be prepared
- ◉ Be organized
- ◉ Be consistent
- ◉ Accept no fluff!

