

## **It's all in the Question!**

*Siobhan Robinson-Morris*  
*Industrial Relations Officer*

Hiring the right people is key to ensuring that your organization is successful, and that the culture you are fostering continues long after you have left the organization. Many organizations who have hired badly, experience internal problems and have several disciplinary issues to contend with. Interviewees come to the interview to impress, and it takes a skilled interviewer to look past the "smoke and mirrors" to see the true candidate sitting in front of them. How then do you become a skilled interviewer? While many interviewing skills are gathered over time, there are a few key things to keep in mind when conducting an interview, and much of the ground work must be done outside of the interviewing room. However, this article will look at the Dos and Don'ts of interviewing to help you develop the necessary skills.

### **DO**

- Background checks of the individual prior to meeting them. Once a candidate has been shortlisted, one should do some fact checking. Does the individual claim to have worked with organizations or group with which you are familiar? Do they claim to be a member of a specific body or to have the requisite qualifications? Prior to the interview (where possible) you should check out the validity of what they have stated on their resume. This could take the form of calling the group or organization and confirming their membership or asking them to bring original certificates to the interview. All persons are not entirely truthful on their resume and may include information to enhance their image.
- Ask interviewees about their personal lives, these questions are not to be invasive, but to just get a sense of what, if any, activities and associations they are involved with outside of the working environment. This gives you an idea of skill sets which the individual may have that might not be utilized in their current role, but may be an asset to the organization. For example finding out that an individual is a Toast Master or took a private course in event planning can add a new slant to an already interesting candidate.

- Ask for practical examples of situations. Do not be afraid to ask them to give you examples of situations where they had to deal with a difficult coworker and how they handled it, or when there were deadlines to be met and the methods they employed to ensure projects were completed on time. These give you a snap shot of how the individual truly reacts and if they would be the right fit for the job or the organization.
- Watch interviewees and pay attention to body language and non-verbal cues. Does the individual dodge eye contact, are they fidgety during the interview, did their face register disdain, but then they answered the question positively? Most persons say the things which they believe the interviewer wants to hear, however, they do not pay attention to the non-verbal cues and these can paint a truer picture of how an individual feels, unlike the rehearsed answer given.
- Request that persons submit to intellectual testing, if required, as well as psychometric testing. These scientific systems ensure that you measure aptitude, as well as personality in an objective way. This also helps to distinguish between a person who is being genuine and a person who has determined how to interview well, and land the job.

## **DON'T**

- Ask “black” interview questions. “Do you plan on having a family?” “Do you think your family life would stop you from being able to give your all to the job?” “How will your religion affect your ability to work overtime?” These questions are discriminatory and once anti-discriminatory legislation is passed, can cause lawsuits should a person be able to prove their answers disqualified them from getting the post.
- Sugar-coat the work load or requirements of the job. Interviewees should be clear of the work load and expectations of the role in order to be sure that this is the post they want. There should be no surprises after the post is accepted. Share the full job description and requirements at the point of the first interview. This ensures that both parties are on the same page going forward in the interview and selection process.
- Only call the references highlighted on the resume, also ask for the name of a colleague at the last job and speak with that person, in order to get a better understanding of how both colleagues and management found working with the individual.

- Interview alone. Everyone views things differently, and having multiple (no more than four) interviewers is beneficial, allowing a better rounded view of the candidate will emerge. This will help to eliminate bias and make the process much more transparent.

Although there are many interviewing pitfalls, it is easy to conduct successful interviews. Being cognizant of the previously discussed dos and don'ts is the first step towards this. Just remember that you must be open, frank, observant and listen well when conducting interviews to secure the right employee for the job and organization.