

Recruitment: the role of the manager (3)

KEY WORDS

- » Employment
- » Discriminate
- » Interview
- » Recruitment
- » Shortlist
- » Values

The last two papers in this section about recruitment and retention discussed the writing of job descriptions and person specifications as well as the shortlisting of candidates for interviews. This paper will look at the next stage of the recruitment process — the interviewing the candidates.

Interviewing is both an art and a science and requires some practice to get good at it. Probably most people who take up a leadership or management position are expected to interview people for their teams, but typically they will not have been prepared for this role and will have little understanding of what is good and what is not so good practice. This paper seeks to explore some of the strategies which the interviewer can use to make the interviewing process both structured and worthwhile.

HOW TO INTERVIEW

The panel

The first thing to decide is *who* will be doing the interviewing. It might mean the manager and a member of the team, such as the deputy manager or another senior team member. In some settings, interviewing with someone who will directly work with the individual is useful as they will ask questions which are pertinent to the role and might have more detailed insight than the manager about practical issues. In other settings, such as care homes and assisted living teams, interviewing with a service user — the people the interviewee will be working with — may highlight how good the candidate is at interacting with them and might be indicative of how they will perform in the role.

The choice of panel members will depend on the seniority of the role being interviewed for with entry-level roles perhaps requiring only one person (not necessarily the manager) to interview, while more senior role may require a panel of two, three or even four. Millman (2016) advised that whatever the panel, it should be the same people who interview all candidates for the same role; otherwise different questions may be asked or the

same question is posed in different ways, which is inconsistent and in essence unfair.

LOGISTICS

The time to be allotted to the interview and where the interview will take place are important considerations. The length of the interview may be determined by the complexity and seniority of the role. The more complex and senior the role, the more time needs to be located to the interview. This allows the panel to explore the issues in depth as well as covering all of the essential elements of the job description. Interviews that are too long, however, become a trial of stamina and may not allow the candidates to present themselves in their best light. Too short an interview and the opportunity to ask pertinent questions and explore the answers is lost. As a rule of thumb allow 30–60 minutes for an interview and if more questions need to be asked or if there are areas that need clarification, consider a second interview as part of the process.

Where the interview will take place is also important. Interviewers should ensure the space is quiet and free from interruptions; mobile phones should be switched off. The space should be comfortable and water available for the candidates. Always remember interviews are a two-way process, the candidate may reject you if they feel they are not treated with respect at the interview (Klehe and Hooft, 2018).

Being prepared for the interview as an interviewer is as important as it is for the interviewee. This means the manager needs to have read the job description and be familiar with it as well as having it to hand to refer to throughout the process. It is also important to be familiar with the application the interviewee has prepared. More practiced

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interviewers often find something in the application to comment on as an ice breaker at the start of the interview, e.g. where the applicant had trained or what hobby they pursued.

STRUCTURED AND UNSTRUCTURED QUESTIONS

One of the pitfalls of interviewing is that different managers will form different opinions about the same candidate depending on the questions they ask the individual (Millman, 2016). This also means that the same manager interviewing different candidates without a structured set of questions will not necessarily subject them to the same level of scrutiny. This allows an increased level of subjectivism to creep into the interview process. Klehe and Hooft (2018) advised that structured interviews focus the attention of the interviewer on the important elements of the role, such as the knowledge and skills needed, and in so doing render the process more objective and less likely to be skewed by personal issues.

The suggestion here is that in order to be fair and focused in the interview process, the interviewers should prepare their questions in advance and that these questions need to be based on testing candidates' knowledge and skills relating to the role. This does not mean, however, that the interview cannot deviate from these; to seek clarity on a point the interviewee makes, for example, ensuring that all of the key elements are covered.

As well as the aforementioned ice-breaking questions, it is vital, especially when undertaking interviews for more senior roles, that the interviewer prepares some questions that are specific to the application, i.e. to probe some skills, experience or knowledge which the candidate claims to have.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

Some questions are essential in every interview these are to ensure the person being interviewed knows what they are being interviewed for and that they have the knowledge and abilities they claim to have. Essential questions include:

▶ **“What do you know about our organisation?”**
Asking this identifies the candidates who have done their homework, are serious about the role and know what they are applying for.

▶ **“Why do you want to work in this area and how do you keep up to date?”** This question allows people who are passionate about what they do to shine. By being clear about their personal and professional motives and engagement, candidates are given a chance to ‘sell’ themselves.

▶ Set a *scenario question* pertinent to the role and ask the person to talk you through how they would deal with that situation. Be clear that you know what their answer should contain. This allows the candidate to demonstrate some of the knowledge and skills required for the job (Ingold et al, 2015).

▶ **“If you were successful at the interview what would a normal day at work look like for you?”** This question allows the interviewee to demonstrate their knowledge of what the job is about. Do not accept vague answers, e.g. “I would be caring for people”, probe and ask “what exactly does that mean in practical terms?”. These questions allow you as an interviewer to be clear that the interviewee is realistic about what will be expected of them and to some extent that they can do the job.

▶ Towards the end of the interview ask the candidate **“given all that we have discussed and what you have learnt about the role, do you still want the role and if so why?”** This allows you to be clear the interviewee has engaged in the process and knows what will be expected of them.

▶ Always ask the person, **“is there anything you would like to ask us about the role or the organisation?”** This question identifies people who have thought about the role as well as allowing them the opportunity to gain clarity about things which may be bothering them.

CONCLUSION

This paper has explored how managers might prepare themselves and their panel for interviewing. It has demonstrated that the process needs to be structured to be fair to all of the candidates. Some questions are essential to good interviewing and should be asked of all interviewees. This paper has also highlighted that interviews are a two-way process and that interviewees also need to feel positive about the interview or they may choose not to take a role even if it is offered to them.

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