



# CITY MANAGER

## HIRING PLANNING COMMITTEE

### AGENDA

Remote Meeting Only  
Essex Junction, VT 05452  
Monday, April 25, 2022  
5:30 PM

E-mail: [manager@essexjunction.org](mailto:manager@essexjunction.org)

[www.essexjunction.org](http://www.essexjunction.org)

Phone: (802) 878-6951

This meeting will be remote participation only. Available options to join the meeting:

- JOIN ONLINE:  
<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/8258587162?pwd=U01TTkNNdWJJbFErUjJUVjRkSmNMUT09>
- JOIN CALLING: (audio only) 1-929-205-6099 | Meeting ID: 825 858 7162 | Passcode: 05452EJ

1. **CALL TO ORDER** [5:30 PM]
2. **PUBLIC TO BE HEARD**
3. **REVIEW AND APPROVE MEETING MINUTES FROM APRIL 11**
4. **BUSINESS ITEMS**
  - a. Complete timeline for City Manager hiring process
  - b. Discuss how to include the community, staff, and department heads in the hiring process
  - c. Discuss tactics needed to assess candidates' viability
  - d. Establish questions for advertisement
  - e. Review next steps
  - f. Set next meeting date and time
5. **ADJOURN**

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Certification: 04/18/2022 Colleen Dwyer

Hiring Committee Deliverables:

**With input opportunities from the Trustees, the public, staff, and department heads:**

- Identify a hiring timeline & plan
- Ensure that community members, staff, and department heads are included in the hiring process
- Utilize a variety of tactics to assess candidates (i.e. short essays with applications, projects, presentations, committee/panel interviews, meet & greets, etc.)
- Provide a process that results in (up to) the top three finalists being provided to the Trustees for ultimate consideration and decision

**VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION  
CITY MANAGER HIRING PLANNING COMMITTEE  
DRAFT MINUTES OF MEETING  
APRIL 11, 2022**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Christina Papadopoulos (Chair), Jeetan Khadka, Jacob Law, Jeb Spaulding, Amber Thibeault, John Wermer

**ADMINISTRATION:** Colleen Dwyer, HR Director

**OTHERS PRESENT:** None

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Ms. Papadopoulos called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM.

**2. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD**

**a. Comments from Public on Items Not on Agenda**

None.

**3. REVIEW AND APPROVE MINUTES FROM MARCH 28**

**JEETAN KHADKA made a motion, seconded by CHRISTINA PAPADOPOULOS seconded, to approve the minutes from March 28. All in favor.**

**4. BUSINESS ITEMS**

**a. Discuss Committee Deliverables and Identify Action Steps**

Ms. Papadopoulos encouraged other members of the committee to consider Chairing or Co-Chairing the Committee, as she has a new professional obligation that would make it difficult to attend the meeting on time.

Ms. Papadopoulos suggested that the Committee begin by creating a hiring timeline. Ms. Thibeault said that the Trustees hope to have a manager in place by September 6. Therefore, the Trustees should approve the final candidate at their July 26 meeting, the position be offered on July 28, and a response provided by August 1. The position will open on May 3, and applications will be accepted until June 4. During this timeframe, the Committee will screen applicants.

The Committee discussed proposed questions for applicants to answer. These include the following:

- What makes you an ideal candidate for this position?
- How would you use diversity and inclusion to enhance our community?
- What is your vision for Essex Junction in the next ten years?

The committee discussed the commitment to diversity, and a desire to ensure that this was detailed in the application process. Mr. Khadka asked how candidate salary/benefit negotiations would be handled, and Ms. Dwyer suggested including the salary range in the application to minimize this. Ms. Thibeault said that the length of the interview process should help to

minimize the amount of time that the applicant would take to accept. Mr. Wermer asked if there were concerns about finding candidates for this position, and noted the high cost of living in the area. Mr. Khadka and Ms. Dwyer said that the cities of Barre and Winooski had numerous candidates for their City manager position. The committee discussed the process in both of those communities.

**b. Set Next Meeting Date & Time**

The City Manager Hiring Planning Committee will be meeting on Monday, April 25 at 5:30 PM.

**5. ADJOURNMENT**

The City Manager Recruitment Committee adjourned at 6:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Darby Mayville



## 10 Hiring Best Practices and Lessons



The hiring process is the first impression potential employees get of your business. How you execute it impacts your bottom line and future success. Consider:

- **How intensive the interview process is:** A 2017 study of 84,000 interviews found the average length of the hiring process is nearly 24 days.
- **How much the hiring process costs:** The December 2017 Talent Acquisition Benchmarking Report by the Society for Human Resource Management found the average cost for each hire was \$4,425.
- **The cost of turnover:** A 2017 report by Employee Benefit News found it costs employers one-third of an employee's annual salary to hire someone to replace that worker.

An efficient hiring process saves a business time and money. Better hiring decisions mean less turnover.

For insights on how to improve the hiring process, we talked to 10 business leaders around the country, from company founders to CEOs, about their experience in hiring. Here are some hiring best practices and lessons you can use when you're hiring someone yourself.

### 1. Remember Attitude Is Everything



**Christy Lamagna, founder of Strategic Meetings & Events, strategist, author and philanthropist**

Christy Lamagna has been managing people since she was 17 years old, when she worked as a bookkeeper at a supermarket. In 2001, she founded Strategic Meetings & Events, which produces global events ranging from multi-million-dollar programs to intimate incentive trips.

Lamagna says while people can be taught the skills needed to perform a job, the attitude they bring is what makes them stand out.

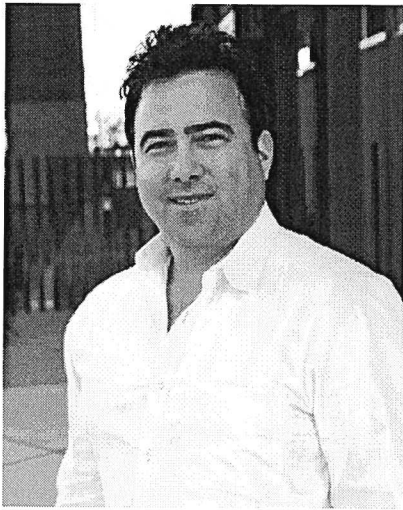
"How they show up, their values and their work ethic are baked in by the time you meet them," Lamagna says. "Those aren't likely to change. If you see someone who has the core personality and values you seek, if possible, hire them and then teach them the skills they need, your way, so they learn it exactly the way you want it done."

Lamagna continues, "If the person asks about how they can be an asset to you, that's a fantastic sign. Anyone who realizes the process is about the person doing the hiring, not the person interviewing, is a rare find. Once someone understands that employment is what they can offer to an organization and that their job is to support the company in achieving its goals, and their boss in achieving theirs, you're halfway home. You can teach skills. You cannot teach someone how to be insightful and strategic."

### 2. Look for Drive and Vision

**Brad Robertson, founder and CEO of Polyient Labs**





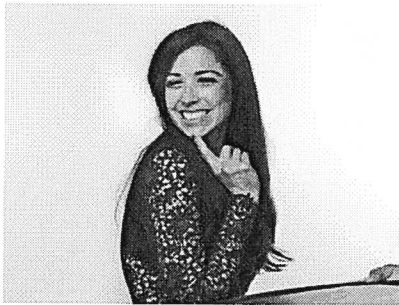
Brad Robertson has two decades of experience launching startups, which he says has taught him to look past the polish when building out his staff. Today, as founder and CEO of blockchain incubator Polyient Labs, he continues to look for energy and enthusiasm when hiring.

"When I'm expanding a team, I want people who are scrappy rather than sophisticated," Robertson says. "Energy is more important than a glossy resume."

Robertson adds, "Nick Casares, Polyient's product director, is a perfect example. When I founded [cloud storage service] CX in Scottsdale 10 years ago, I needed a UX designer. MIT grads were applying for the role. Nick had an impressive background, but more importantly, he demonstrated a drive and vision. Six years later, when I founded Polyient and needed someone to manage employees and clients across several time zones, Nick was the first person I thought of."

### 3. Prioritize Candidates Who Have Done Their Research

Elle Shelley, founder and CEO of Cobalt



Elle Shelley is the founder and CEO of Cobalt, a co-creation platform used by the Global 1000 to digitally collaborate and co-create products and services. Shelley has hired more than 45 people over the course of her career and says many of her top candidates are the ones who arrive thoroughly prepared to the interview.

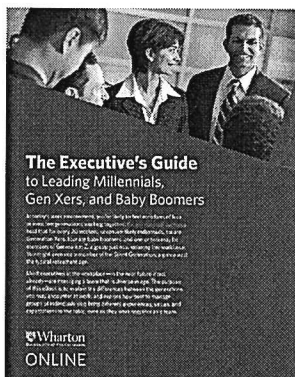
"I love hiring people who understand the brand from the customer perspective," Shelley says. "When someone shows up to an interview having researched the company, the history, the products, etc., I am always impressed. Those that are prepared also tend to have better questions that allow us to move deeper into a conversation about the role, as opposed to the usual, more scripted 'getting to

know you' type questions."

Besides being willing to put in the time to learn *before* the interview, Shelley says a willingness to learn once hired is essential, too.

"I have hired many, many great people. One that stands out was a hire very early in my career," Shelley says. "I wasn't quite sure what the role would look like, so I was interviewing a variety of candidates. One very inexperienced candidate came in and was very forthcoming with me about her lack of skills."

Shelley continues, "She then said that she loved to learn and would take any and all classes on her own time. It was at that moment that I realized the most important thing to look for is attitude. It's the one skill you can't teach. Henry Ford got it right when he famously said, 'Whether you think you can or you think you can't, you're right.'"

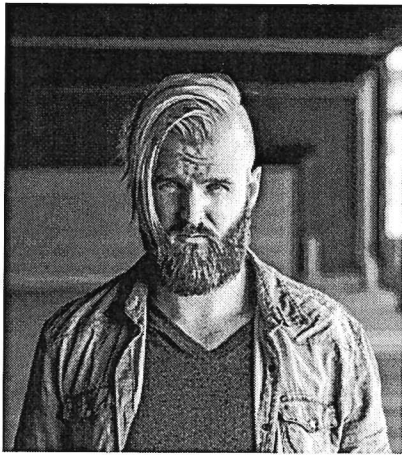


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Many executives manage teams that span five generations: The Silent Generation, Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z. Download our free eBook, "The Executive's Guide to Leading Multi-Generational Teams," for practical advice on how to communicate with, motivate, and manage each generation.

## 4. Evolve Hiring as Your Business Evolves

Nik Ingersoll, co-founder and CMO of Barnana



Nik Ingersoll grew snack food company Barnana to an 8-figure revenue business in less than 5 years and has hired and managed hundreds of employees, all before the age of 30 years old. Ingersoll says hirers should be aware that the hiring process should be different for each stage of your business.

"Early on, hiring is about finding Swiss army knives, people who want to and can do whatever it takes to get any job done," Ingersoll says. "Early on, hiring is about culture – building a culture that can endure while scaling later on."

Ingersoll continues, "As the business grows larger and larger with scale, hiring priorities change. Now it's about finding scalpels: people with specific skillsets to achieve specific tasks in the business. By using this methodology, it will help ensure that the business runs like a nimble, well-oiled machine with a cool, purposeful company culture."

To find people who will be a good fit for your culture, Ingersoll makes a couple recommendations.

"Sign number one: ask them, 'What is the worst job you've ever had?'" Ingersoll says. "You will be surprised to learn the amount of people who have never had a real job. I am very unlikely to hire these people. If they haven't had to experience the suck, it is unlikely they will be able to handle firefighting in a startup."

Sign number two? "Empathy," Ingersoll says. "If someone lacks empathy, it is unlikely that they will work well with others. If they possess large amounts of empathy, they are more likely to thrive in a team environment."

## 5. Embrace Those Who Embrace Change



Lisa Marcyes, director of social media at [Oracle](#)

For the past decade, Lisa Marcyes has worked with brands in the tech field, helping them build their digital and social presence. Marcyes estimates she has managed more than 100 people and hired at least 25. She says that diversity is critical to the success of any team. Hiring those who have strengths where you or your team have weaknesses is a solid strategy.

And, she adds, since the only constant in business, especially in tech, is change, having the ability to drive change and assist in meeting bottom line goals is key.

"I always look for individuals who exhibit positivity and an openness to learning new things," Marcyes says. "Candidates who exhibit a willingness to jump in, embrace new technology and take on new projects will be an asset to any organization."

## 6. Use Your Intuition



Maya Kaimal, founder and chief creative officer of [Maya Kaimal Foods](#)

Award-winning cookbook author and food entrepreneur Maya Kaimal cooks from the heart and pours her passion into her Maya Kaimal Food products. She works from a similar heart-space when hiring, too, which hasn't steered her wrong in the more than 15 years since her namesake brand launched.

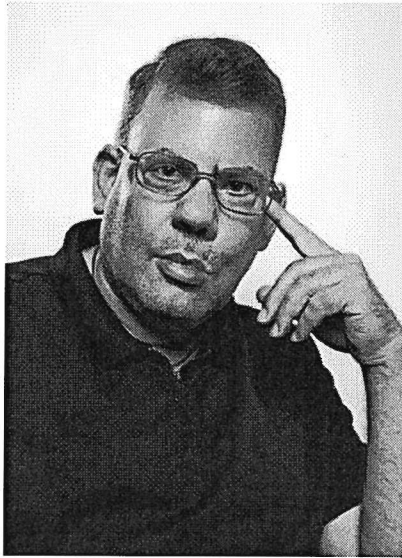
"I don't have a typical checklist of questions I ask candidates during interviews," Kaimal says. "I am not interested in the standard questions – for example, 'Tell me something challenging and how you worked through it.' I feel like I'll get a canned response that doesn't really help me get to know them."

Kaimal continues, "The process, for me, is more intuitive...I think about, who is this human being I am speaking with and possibly hiring? What gets them excited in life? What are they passionate about? To this day, I always make sure to ask [people what they like to do for fun], because it is important to me that this person connects with the passion behind my company's mission...I interview for emotional intelligence."

One of Kaimal's long-time hires began as a bookkeeper and has risen to director of operations over the 10 years she has been with Kaimal's company. Kaimal hired her sight unseen through a referral. When Kaimal liked what she heard over a phone interview, the pair immediately clicked, and the hire became a quick study and a committed team member.

"Sometimes you just get a feel for someone, that they are going to make your life better, and you make more and more room for them in your organization," Kaimal says.

## 7. Consider Social Media Footprints



**Jeff Gomez, CEO of Starlight Runner Entertainment**

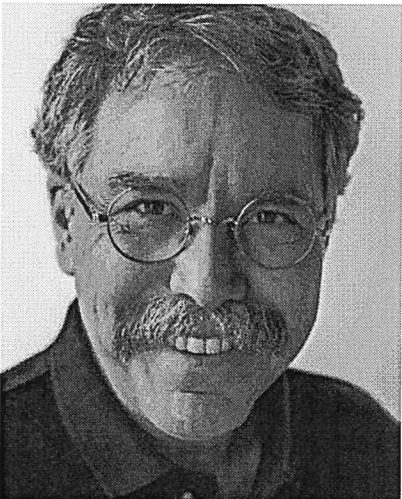
Looking at candidates' social media profiles is common these days. A 2018 survey by CareerBuilder found 70 percent of employers research job candidates on their social networks.

Today's candidates should be aware of not just what they present in person, but their online reputation, as well, says Jeff Gomez, CEO of multi-platform entertainment studio Starlight Runner Entertainment. Having had high-profile clients like the Walt Disney Company, Mattel and Microsoft Studios 343 Industries, Gomez and his team closely review candidates in person and online.

"There is now a wealth of information that can be used to assess a potential hire's level of responsibility, sociability, creativity and intelligence," Gomez says. "Across the entertainment industry, the social media footprint of prospective employees is reviewed and assessed."

Gomez continues, "A certain degree of frivolous content is fine, but we look for posts that indicate cleverness or dynamic thinking, warmth and friendliness, persuasion without combativeness and thoughtful observation. If the job requires a serious skillset or creativity, at least some of that ought to be in evidence through their social media. In this day and age, if there is an unusually small social media presence, we would wonder why."

## 8. Take Your Time



**Peter Economy, leadership and management columnist for Inc.com**

Peter Economy is a best-selling publishing consultant, business author, developmental editor and ghostwriter with more than 100 books to his credit and 2 million copies sold. In his research and work, he has had the opportunity to speak with countless business experts and develop his own teams. He says he believes the more you put into the interview process, the better.

"Don't rush it," Economy says. "And don't conduct just one interview all by yourself and make a hire. Instead, plan on multiple rounds of interviews – with yourself, managers in other departments who will interact with your new hire, and key people in your own department. If you're still interested in the interviewee after you receive feedback from the other interviewers, then do one final interview yourself before making an offer."

One thing that can help you reach a decision more quickly? Referrals.

"I'm a big fan of referrals, job candidates who are sent to me by my clients and colleagues," Economy says. "One of my best hires ever was one such referral. I trusted the opinion of my colleague – that the

candidate would be a perfect fit for my business – and she was right. This new hire has become an integral and valued part of my own business, and I am grateful for the referral."

## 9. Make the Hiring Process Human

**Colin Nederkoorn, CEO of Customer.io**

It doesn't matter if you post a job online and screen candidates digitally – the hiring process involves living, breathing people. As such, Colin Nederkoorn, CEO of marketing automation platform Customer.io, says it's critical to remain empathetic to people who are applying.

"Almost everyone who is hiring has at one point been on the other side of the table," Nederkoorn, whose company has a distributed team of 42 people around the globe, says. "We try to find adjustments we can make in our process to make it more fair and human."

Nederkoorn suggests to:

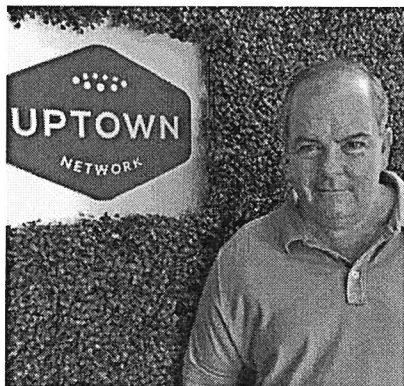


- "Publish a date you'll stop accepting applicants on the job post. Let people know you won't review applications until after that date. This lets candidates know they can take their time and apply thoughtfully. It also removes the bias you might have towards early applicants."
- "Communicate your process with candidates in emails. How long will it take? What are the steps? Where are they now? A lot of companies don't even tell candidates that they won't be moving forward. You can still create a great experience for the people you don't hire."
- "Don't forget that people are interviewing your company, too. Find ways to make candidates feel valued. One thing we do is a 30-minute 'ask-me-anything' with the CEO at the end of the process. That lets candidates test our value of transparency and also hopefully helps us win out against companies where upper management was invisible to them during hiring."

Nederkoorn adds that at Customer.io, his team values people who love to learn, which can often be discovered through what candidates choose to do outside of work and how they spend their free time.

"We look for examples of initiative, curiosity and grit," Nederkoorn says.

## 10. Check Out These Final Quick Tips



Jack Serfass, CEO and co-founder of [Uptown Network](#)

Jack Serfass, CEO and co-founder of Uptown Network, has been a leader in organizations that have hired more than 2,500 employees. His current company Uptown Network combines technology and restaurant experience with a mission to replace all paper menus with digital menus.

Serfass offers some final quick tips for those going through the hiring process:

- The help wanted ad should inspire people to apply.
- Cultural fit is as important as the talent fit.
- For applicants that you decide are not a fit, send a gracious email or letter and ask the courtesy to keep their application on file for the future.
- Establish baseline requirements and differentiators before the process begins and try to measure each candidate consistently.
- Network even when you do not have an open position and build a 'bench'.
- If more than one person is interviewing the same candidate, ensure that they are asking different questions.

"The hiring process is the most important process of any organization," Serfass adds. "The people you invite to be part of your company will determine the final outcome."

## Made Some Great Hires? Learn How to Be a Better Leader.

When you make the right choices in the hiring process, you positively impact retention, company culture and, ultimately, your bottom line. Being strategic before you make an offer improves the likelihood the candidate you decide on will be a great fit for your company. From the job posting to the researching candidates, to the interview and follow-up, each component of the hiring process is meaningful.

Once you've hired a team member or dozens, get more tips for sharpening your skills as a business leader. Download our e-book, [The Executive's Guide to Leading Millennials, Gen Xers and Baby Boomers](#).

May 7, 2019

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### TOOLKITS

Feedback

# Interviewing Candidates for Employment

## Overview

The candidate interview is a vital component of the hiring process. To hire the most qualified candidates, human resource professionals and hiring managers must be well informed on how to conduct interviews effectively. This article provides an overview of various interviewing methods, both structured and unstructured. It discusses the most widely used types of interviewing—telephone prescreen, direct one-on-one and panel interviews—and explains the objectives and techniques of behavioral, competency-based and situational approaches to interviewing.

Employers must be aware of federal and state prohibitions on asking certain types of questions during employment interviews. This article presents some basic guidelines for interviewers to follow to avoid claims of discrimination or bias in hiring, and it lists examples of questions *not* to ask job applicants.

With careful preparation, HR professionals and hiring managers can make the most of employment interviews and obtain the information they need. Preparatory steps include selecting a method of interviewing, drafting useful questions, phrasing questions properly and sharpening one's listening skills.

## Business Case

Interviewing is an important step in the employee selection process. If done effectively, the interview enables the employer to determine if an applicant's skills, experience and personality meet the job's requirements. It also helps the employer assess whether an applicant would likely fit in with the corporate culture. In addition, preparing for an interview can help clarify a position's responsibilities.

Moreover, to the extent that the interview process leads to the hiring of the most suitable candidate, it can help contain the organization's long-term turnover costs. Applicants also benefit from an effective interview, as it enables them to determine if their employment needs and interests would likely be met. See [Stop Lying to Job Candidates About the Role](https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/talent-acquisition/pages/stop-lying-to-job-candidates.aspx) ([www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/talent-acquisition/pages/stop-lying-to-job-candidates.aspx](https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/talent-acquisition/pages/stop-lying-to-job-candidates.aspx)).

## Types of Interviewing

In implementing an accurate and fair selection method, the employer can select from a variety of interviewing techniques. The choice depends on considerations such as the nature of the position being filled, the industry, the corporate culture and the type of information the employer seeks to gain from the applicant.



Interviewing candidates for employment is a required business function. The main purpose of structured interviewing is to pinpoint job skills that are essential to the position. The interviewer asks a specific set of questions of all applicants for the particular position. This straightforward approach makes it easier for the interviewer to evaluate and compare applicants fairly. Some interviewers ask the questions in a predetermined order, while others may not adhere to a strict order but still make certain they address all the planned questions.

Structured interviewing generally provides the interviewer with the information needed to make the hiring decision. It also can be crucial in defending against allegations of discrimination in hiring and selection, because all applicants are asked the same questions.

In an unstructured interview, the interviewer does not have a strict agenda but rather allows the applicant to set the pace of the interview. Questions tend to be open-ended, which can enable the candidate to disclose more than he or she might if asked closed-ended questions requiring only a brief answer. In addition, questions in an unstructured interview can be tailored according to an applicant's skills and experience levels. However, the absence of structure may make it difficult to compare and rank applicants because they are not asked the same set of questions.

The most widely used types of interviewing are:

- The telephone prescreen interview.
- The direct one-on-one interview, which can take a behavioral, competency-based or situational approach.
- The panel interview.

See 'Just Text Me': Job Interviews by Today's Preferred Communication Tool ([www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/talent-acquisition/pages/job-interviews-text-preferred-communication-tool.aspx](http://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/talent-acquisition/pages/job-interviews-text-preferred-communication-tool.aspx)).

### TELEPHONE PRESCREEN INTERVIEW

A telephone prescreen interview can be useful for assessing whether an applicant's qualifications, experience, skills and salary needs are compatible with the position and the organization. Telephone interviews are often used to narrow the field of applicants who will be invited for in-person interviews. During the prescreen stage, the interviewer should ask the applicant enough carefully prepared questions to determine whether he or she is, in fact, a viable candidate for the position.

Telephone prescreen interviews can help the employer:

- Assess the applicant's general communication skills.
- Clarify unclear items on the applicant's resume.
- Ask about frequent job changes or gaps in employment.
- Have a candid conversation with the applicant about salary requirements.

See Telephone Pre-Interview Screening Form ([www.shrm.org/ResourcesAndTools/tools-and-samples/hr-forms/Pages/telephone-screening-form.aspx](http://www.shrm.org/ResourcesAndTools/tools-and-samples/hr-forms/Pages/telephone-screening-form.aspx)).

### DIRECT ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEW

The traditional face-to-face interview with the candidate can be structured or unstructured, and it can be approached in one of several ways, depending on the types of information the interviewer seeks. The three most common approaches to one-on-one employment interviews are behavioral, competency-based and situational.

**Behavioral and competency-based approaches.** Behavioral and competency-based interviewing both aim to discover how the interviewee performed in specific situations. The logic is based on the principle that past performance predicts future behavior; how the applicant behaved in the past indicates how he or she will behave in the future.

In the behavioral approach, the interviewer asks questions to assess how an applicant's suitability for a position. The purpose is to review the candidate's experience, personal attributes and job-related skills. The competency-based approach focuses specifically on skills needed for the position; job-related skills constitute the criteria against which applicants are measured.

In a behavioral or a competency-based interview, the interviewer's questions are designed to determine if the applicant possesses certain attributes or skills. Instead of asking how the applicant would handle a hypothetical situation, the interviewer asks the applicant how he or she did, in fact, handle a particular situation in the past. Behavioral and competency-based interview questions tend to be pointed, probing and specific.

Following are some examples of behavioral questions:

- Describe a situation in which you were able to use persuasion to successfully convince someone to see things your way.
- Describe a time when you were faced with a stressful situation that demonstrated your coping skills.
- Give me a specific example of a time when you used good judgment and logic in solving a problem.
- Give me an example of a time when you set a goal and were able to achieve it.
- Tell me about a time when you had to use your presentation skills to influence someone's opinion.
- Give me a specific example of a time when you had to conform to a policy with which you did not agree.

If answers seem to be thin on detail, the interviewer can ask follow-up questions:

- What exactly did you do?
- What was your specific role in this?
- What challenges did you come across?
- Why precisely did you do that?
- Why exactly did you make that decision?

Competency-based interviewing can give the interviewer a sense of an applicant's job performance and attitude toward work.

Following are some examples of competency-based questions:

- Tell me about a time when you had to encourage others to contribute ideas or opinions. How did you get everyone to contribute? What was the end result?
- Tell me about a situation in which your spoken communication skills made a difference in the outcome. How did you feel? What did you learn?
- Tell me about a situation when you had to persuade others to accept your point of view when they thought you were wrong. How did you prepare? What was your approach? How did they react? What was the outcome?

See Competencies Hold the Key to Better Hiring and ([www.shrm.org/hr-today/news/hr-magazine/Pages/0315-competencies-hiring.aspx](http://www.shrm.org/hr-today/news/hr-magazine/Pages/0315-competencies-hiring.aspx)) Make Better Hires with Competency Models ([www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/talent-acquisition/pages/make-better-hires-with-competency-models.aspx](http://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/talent-acquisition/pages/make-better-hires-with-competency-models.aspx)).

**Situational approach.** The situational approach is an interview technique that gives the candidate a hypothetical scenario or event and focuses on his or her past experiences, behaviors, knowledge, skills and abilities by asking the candidate to provide specific examples of how the candidate would respond given the situation described. This type of interview reveals how an applicant thinks and how he or she would react in a particular situation. The following are examples of situational interview questions:

- You have been hired as the HR director in a 300-employee company and are struggling to perform the necessary HR administrative work by yourself. Your manager, the CFO, tells you that you need to be more strategic. How would you handle this situation?
- You learn that a former co-worker at your last company is applying for an accounting position with your company. You have heard that this person was terminated after admitting to embezzling funds from the company but that no criminal charge was

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- You are applying for a customer service position for a cable television company. If a technician visits a home to make a repair and afterward you receive a call from the customer telling you that the technician left muddy footprints on her new carpeting, how would you respond?

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### GROUP INTERVIEWS

There are two types of group interviews—a candidate group and a panel group. In a candidate group interview, a candidate is in a room with other job applicants who may be applying for the same position. Each candidate listens to information about the company and the position and may be asked to answer questions or participate in group exercises. Candidate group interviews are less common than panel group interviews.

In a panel group interview a candidate is interviewed individually by a panel of two or more people. This type of group interview is usually a question-and-answer session, but a candidate may also be asked to participate in an exercise or test. Panel interviews can be either structured or unstructured. When organized properly, a panel interview can create a broader picture of the candidate than a one-on-one interview would produce. Even weaker interviewers can learn by observing. Panel interviews can also help less-experienced employees get involved in the hiring process.

The panel should include no more than four or five people; a larger panel could be intimidating and unwieldy. One interviewer should serve as the leader, and other participants should serve in support roles. While all the interviewers need to be involved throughout the interview, the difference in the two roles needs to be very clear. See *The Ins and Outs of Team Interviewing* ([www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/talent-acquisition/pages/team-interviewing-best-practices.aspx](http://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/talent-acquisition/pages/team-interviewing-best-practices.aspx)) and *When would an employer use a group interview technique?* ([www.shrm.org/ResourcesAndTools/tools-and-samples/hr-qa/Pages/whenwouldanemployeruseagroupinterviewtechnique.aspx#sthash.GldJ5qEW.dpuf](http://www.shrm.org/ResourcesAndTools/tools-and-samples/hr-qa/Pages/whenwouldanemployeruseagroupinterviewtechnique.aspx#sthash.GldJ5qEW.dpuf))

### Preparing for the Interview

To help ensure the validity and effectiveness of employment interviews, the interviewer must prepare in advance. Before implementing the interview process for a given position, the HR professional who will be asking the questions should complete the following preparations:

- Determine the critical success factors of the job.
- Rank—according to the job specifications—the most important qualities, experiences, education and characteristics that a successful candidate would possess.
- Make a list of qualities, skills and types of experience to use to screen resumes and job interview candidates.
- Select specific questions to determine whether an applicant possesses the critical success factors.
- Decide the type of interview process that will be used.
- Review beforehand the job description and the resume of each candidate to be interviewed.
- Schedule a planning meeting with the appropriate attendees, such as co-workers, an indirect but interested manager or internal customers of the position.
- Determine who will interview the candidates.
- Plan the interview and the follow-up process.
- Decide on the applicant screening questions for the telephone screens.
- Identify the appropriate questions for the post-interview assessment of candidates by each interviewer.



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Interviewing is not a new concept, but it has evolved significantly from its roots. It doesn't require a sophisticated technique, but it does require more than just asking candidates if they possess the required skills and attributes. The most recent thinking on how to conduct job interviews recommends that employers ask applicants about specific incidents in the workplace. Therefore, questions should be designed to show how the candidate has displayed the required skills in specific situations during his or her career. Responses to such questions can provide enhanced glimpses into applicants' actual experiences.

See Automation Removes the Pain from Candidate Interview Scheduling ([www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/talent-acquisition/pages/automation-candidate-interview-scheduling.aspx](http://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/talent-acquisition/pages/automation-candidate-interview-scheduling.aspx)).

### Framing the Questions

For both the employer and the candidate to get the most out of an interview, it is essential to carefully consider the type of questions to ask. Despite the importance of preparing questions in advance, the employer should not go into an interview with a list of ideal answers in mind. It is unlikely that any applicant would come close to providing such answers. A better approach is to keep in mind ideal characteristics that a successful candidate would possess. See Sample Interview Questions.

([www.shrm.org/ResourcesAndTools/tools-and-samples/interview-questions/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.shrm.org/ResourcesAndTools/tools-and-samples/interview-questions/Pages/default.aspx))

Questioning should elicit information that will shed light on a candidate's ability to perform the job effectively. Many experts say it is best to ask open-ended questions ("Tell me about your relationship with your previous manager; how could it have been improved?") rather than closed-ended questions requiring only brief specific responses ("How many people reported to you?"). See Want to Really Get to Know Your Candidates? Interview for Emotional Intelligence ([www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/talent-acquisition/pages/want-to-really-get-to-know-your-candidates-interview-for-emotional-intelligence.aspx](http://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/talent-acquisition/pages/want-to-really-get-to-know-your-candidates-interview-for-emotional-intelligence.aspx)).

Open-ended questions encourage candidates to provide longer answers and to expand on their knowledge, strengths and job experiences. For interviewers, such questions can provide greater insight into a candidate's personality. They can also help employers gauge an applicant's ability to articulate his or her work experience, level of motivation, communication skills, ability to solve problems and degree of interest in the job.

Open-ended questions can provide a sense of an applicant's potential and whether the person would be a cultural fit. Following are some examples of open-ended questions:

- Tell me about your past work experience.
- What are you looking to gain from your next position?
- Why do you want to work for our company?
- Why did you leave your last job?
- Tell me about your relationship with your previous manager: How was it productive? How could it have been improved?
- Why was math your most difficult subject in school?
- Please describe your management style.

Closed-ended job interview questions can enable the employer to receive direct responses and specific information from the candidate, and they can help the interviewer control the direction of the interview. But such questions can have drawbacks:

- They do not encourage candidates to elaborate on their feelings or preferences toward particular topics.
- They limit candidates' ability to discuss their competencies.
- They can leave situations unanswered or unclear.
- They can be frustrating for candidates who may want to explain or state relevant information.

Following are some examples of closed-ended questions:

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  - Have you ever worked from home?
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- When did you leave your last job?
- Did you have a productive relationship with your previous manager?
- What was your best subject in school?
- What was your most difficult subject?
- What was your GPA?

See Interviewing the Boss: 12 Intelligent Questions to Ask to Politely Assess Your Next Manager ([www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/organizational-and-employee-development/pages/interviewing-the-boss.aspx](http://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/organizational-and-employee-development/pages/interviewing-the-boss.aspx)) and How Experiential Interviewing Can Help You Hire Better Talent ([www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/talent-acquisition/pages/how-experiential-interviewing-can-help-you-hire-better-talent.aspx](http://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/talent-acquisition/pages/how-experiential-interviewing-can-help-you-hire-better-talent.aspx)).

#### Legal Issues

Along with choosing an interview approach and shaping the questions ahead of time, the interviewer should become familiar with the types of questions and statements that must be avoided in any interview. For example, interviewers should not make statements that could be construed as creating a contract of employment. When describing the job, it is best to avoid using terms such as "permanent," "career job opportunity," or "long term." Interviewers should also avoid making excessive assurances about job security or statements suggesting that employment would last as long as the employee performed well in the position. In addition, to minimize the risk of discrimination lawsuits, interviewers must familiarize themselves with topics that are not permissible as interview questions. See These Interview Questions Could Get HR in Trouble ([www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/talent-acquisition/pages/interview-questions-hr-trouble.aspx](http://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/talent-acquisition/pages/interview-questions-hr-trouble.aspx)).

Provisions of various federal laws affect the types of questions that organizations may ask an applicant during an employment interview. For example, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination based on race, sex, color, national origin and religion. The Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 prohibits questions about a person's age. The wide-ranging Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) protects qualified individuals with disabilities from discrimination in employment. The Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2008 prohibits employers from collecting and using genetic information. The Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures of 1978, though not in and of themselves legislation or law, have been given deference by the courts in litigation concerning employment issues.

Questions relating either directly or indirectly to age, sex, race, color, national origin, religion, genetics or disabilities should be avoided entirely. If information needed about an applicant might fall into any of those categories, the interviewer should make sure that the question relates to a bona fide occupational qualification or is required by federal or state law to be asked. See Federal Discrimination Laws Training for Supervisors. ([www.shrm.org/ResourcesAndTools/tools-and-samples/presentations/Pages/titleviitraining%20for%20supervisor.aspx](http://www.shrm.org/ResourcesAndTools/tools-and-samples/presentations/Pages/titleviitraining%20for%20supervisor.aspx))

Employers should also be aware of some of the specific prohibitions contained in the ADA. Employers may never ask if an applicant has a disability. They may ask only if there is anything that precludes the applicant from performing—with or without a reasonable accommodation—the essential functions of the position for which he or she is applying.

State laws can be broader in scope than federal laws. For example, federal law does not cover sexual orientation, but many states do. In addition, all states have enacted at least one law pertaining to employment discrimination. Whether a particular state's law would apply to a particular organization, however, could depend on the size of its workforce. In some states, employers with just one

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employees are exempt from state's anti-discrimination laws. In particular, only employers with 15 or more employees are subject to the most complex and comprehensive federal anti-discrimination laws. Thus, in some states an employer could be exempt from a federal law yet still be subject to a similar provision under state law.

It is important for interviewers to be familiar with the employment laws of the state in which they are operating and to be well versed in the federal and state legal provisions regulating the types of questions permissible in an employment interview.

Some questions that appear innocent on the surface may be considered discriminatory. The way they are phrased is key. Employers should determine in advance of the interview if the information sought by each question is really necessary for assessing an applicant's competence or qualifications for the job.

Even if a particular question would not be barred under federal or state law, it should be omitted if it is not essential. Asking irrelevant questions may offend an applicant or damage the organization's reputation. Following are examples of questions *not* to ask during an employment interview:

- Are you a U.S. citizen?
- Were you born here?
- Where are you from?
- What is your ethnic heritage?
- What is that accent you have?
- How old are you?
- When were you born?
- Are you married?
- Do you have any children? What are your child care arrangements? (Questions about family status are not job-related and should not be asked.)
- When did you graduate from high school?
- What church do you go to?
- What clubs or organizations do you belong to?
- Have you ever filed a worker's compensation claim? (You may not ask this question or any related question during the pre-offer stage.)
- What disabilities do you have?
- Do you have AIDS, or are you HIV-positive? (There is no acceptable way to inquire about this or any other medical condition.)

In addition, the interviewer should not ask questions about arrests that did *not* result in a conviction. Some states also prohibit employers from asking candidates about marijuana-related convictions that are two or more years old. And employers should never ask an applicant to submit a photograph—even if the request makes clear that providing a photo is optional, not mandatory.

See:

Interview training presentation ([www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/tools-and-samples/presentations/pages/interviewingguidanceon.aspx](http://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/tools-and-samples/presentations/pages/interviewingguidanceon.aspx))

Guidelines on Interview and Employment Application Questions ([www.shrm.org/ResourcesAndTools/tools-and-samples/toolkits/Pages/Interviewandemploymentapplicationquestions.aspx](http://www.shrm.org/ResourcesAndTools/tools-and-samples/toolkits/Pages/Interviewandemploymentapplicationquestions.aspx))

Federal Laws Prohibiting Job Discrimination (<http://www.eeoc.gov/facts/qanda.html>)

Conducting the Interview

The main goal of the interview is to identify the best candidate for the job. Interview applicants can be asked to identify the top candidates for a job. A successful and effective interview is one in which both the interviewer and the interviewee receive accurate information and can make informed decisions about the applicant's suitability for the job. See Basics for Effective Interviews ([www.shrm.org/ResourcesAndTools/tools-and-samples/presentations/Pages/basicsforeffectiveinterviews.aspx](http://www.shrm.org/ResourcesAndTools/tools-and-samples/presentations/Pages/basicsforeffectiveinterviews.aspx)) training presentation.

The interview process can be stressful for both the interviewer and the interviewee. It is normal for an applicant to be nervous, so interviewers should try to put the person at ease from the moment he or she enters the room. By helping the interviewee feel relaxed and comfortable, the interviewer stands a better chance of obtaining a clear idea of the applicant's abilities and personality.

Before commencing with prepared questions, the interviewer could ease tensions by encouraging the applicant to talk about a particular interest—perhaps something on the person's resume. At this point the interviewer might also want to recap the position and what it entails. This can help the applicant answer questions more knowledgeably and consider again whether he or she is genuinely interested in the job.

### CONTROLLING THE INTERVIEW

For an interview to be as useful as possible in the employment-decision process, the interviewer must maintain complete control over the interview at all times. Establishing and maintaining control requires, in addition to good questioning techniques, effective listening skills.

Effective listening is challenging, partly because people are often more focused on what they're saying than on what they're hearing. The key for the interviewer is to speak as little as possible. One approach to effective listening is a paraphrase of the golden rule: Listen to others as you would have them listen to you. Here are some tips for listening effectively:

- Minimize internal and external distractions; focus only on what the applicant is saying.
- Listen to the full answer before asking the next question.
- Clarify the candidate's answers if necessary and ask if more information is needed. Occasionally it may be useful for interviewers to restate an applicant's reply in their own words.
- Watch the interviewee's facial expressions and body language.

### ENCOURAGING COMMUNICATION

To gain as much information as possible from an applicant, the interviewer should create an atmosphere that promotes communication. Following are suggestions for building rapport and fostering discussion:

- Set aside a quiet place for the interview.
- Schedule enough time so that the interview will not be rushed.
- Inform the candidate well in advance about the location and time of the interview.
- Greet the candidate with a pleasant smile and a firm handshake. Introduce yourself and anyone else who will be involved in the interview.
- Ask for permission to record the interview or take notes.
- Begin in a manner that provides a comfortable atmosphere for the candidate.
- Outline the interview objectives and structure.
- Try to ask questions that will facilitate discussion. Avoid questions requiring only a yes or no answer. Keep the questions open-ended so that the applicant has the opportunity to speak freely.
- Ask only job-related questions. Steer clear of personal, private and discriminatory questions.
- Start with easier questions and gradually build to more difficult or searching questions.
- Ask only one question at a time.

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- Do not lead, prompt, interrupt or help the candidate find an answer.
- Avoid facial expressions that could lead to an answer.
- Listen carefully to the candidate's answers.
- Probe for the applicant's ability to manage and work in teams.
- Assess whether the candidate would fit with the organization's culture.

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### FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

Asking follow-up questions—also called probing—can be necessary when the interviewer does not fully understand a response, when answers are vague or ambiguous, or when the interviewer require more specific information from the applicant.

Probing questions inviting more detail often begin with "what" or "how." Questions inviting personal reflection often begin with "do you" or "are you." Questions beginning with "why" may put the respondent on the defensive or result in little useful information and require additional probing.

It is helpful to be familiar with some techniques of probing. Here are a few examples:

- Could you please tell me more about . . . ?
- I'm not quite sure I understood. Could you tell me more about that?
- I'm not certain what you mean by . . . Could you give me some examples?
- Could you tell me more about your thinking on that?
- You mentioned . . . Could you tell me more about that? What stands out in your mind about that?
- This is what I thought I heard . . . Did I understand you correctly?
- What I hear you saying is . . .
- Can you give me an example of . . . ?
- What makes you feel that way?
- You just told me about . . . I'd also like to know about . . .

### REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Reflection questions are designed to help the interviewer achieve a deeper understanding of the applicant's responses. Such questions rarely evoke defensiveness; applicants want the interviewer to understand their responses. Reflection questions might begin with phrases such as:

- Let me say back to you what I thought I heard you say . . .
- That made you think (or feel) . . . ?
- You mean that . . . ?

The potential pluses of reflection questions are varied. They can:

- Demonstrate to the applicant that his or her responses are understood.
- Rephrase the applicant's response in clearer or more articulate language.
- Let the applicant know the interviewer is paying attention.
- Provide the applicant with an additional opportunity to elaborate on his or her responses.

### CLOSING THE INTERVIEW

Feedback

A popular trend for closing the interview is to say thank you to the candidate and to offer the candidate the opportunity to ask questions. This will enable the candidate to gain clarification on aspects of the position and on employment conditions such as hours, salary and benefits. The interviewer should answer the candidate's questions as frankly as possible. If it is not an appropriate time to discuss compensation—perhaps others are present—the interviewer can suggest a follow-up discussion. Interviewers should be prepared to provide documents describing the company and its benefits. See [Recruiters Need to Be Ready to Answer These Candidate Questions](http://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/talent-acquisition/pages/recruiters-prepare-answer-candidate-questions.aspx) (www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/talent-acquisition/pages/recruiters-prepare-answer-candidate-questions.aspx).

In closing an interview, the interviewer may want to:

- Ask if the candidate is interested in the job based on the information provided during the interview.
- Ask about availability.
- Ask for a list of people who can be contacted for references.
- Explain the time frame for the rest of the interviews, the subsequent steps in the process and when a decision is likely to be made.
- Explain how to get in touch with the interviewer and when to expect to hear from him or her.
- Walk the candidate to the door and thank the person for the interview.

Such steps can ensure the applicant is left with a positive impression of the interviewer and the organization. After interviews, the interviewer should update the assessment grids for all active candidates. See [Candidate Evaluation Form](http://www.shrm.org/ResourcesAndTools/tools-and-samples/hr-forms/Pages/candidate-evaluation-form.aspx) (www.shrm.org/ResourcesAndTools/tools-and-samples/hr-forms/Pages/candidate-evaluation-form.aspx).

#### Additional Considerations

In addition to the general aspects of preparing for and conducting employment interviews already discussed, a few other issues bear consideration. These include the possibility that a candidate can be over prepared for an interview, thus affecting the impressions he or she creates; the question of whether and how to take notes during an interview; and methods of following up with candidates after initial interviews.

#### OVER-PREPAREDNESS

The overly prepared applicant can be a puzzle for hiring managers who are trying to determine if the applicant would be a good fit for the position and the organization. Job seekers can learn from books, magazine articles and websites not only what questions to expect but also what answers to give to those questions. Determining whether an applicant is providing a truthful response to specific questions can be equally as challenging for interviewers. There are, however, several techniques that may be useful:

- Do some research to determine if the questions you are asking are on popular interview preparation websites. If they are, but the interviewer still feel it is important to ask those questions, he or she can consider how to push applicants beyond their prepared responses.
- Ask follow up-questions. Keep asking questions until the applicant gives a response that sounds genuine and thoughtful rather than studied and coached.
- Do not go astray and ask irrelevant questions when trying to generate questions that do not elicit rehearsed responses.
- Consider that the rehearsed responses may be legitimate and informative. The fact that an applicant has prepared a response does not necessarily mean that the applicant is being insincere or untruthful.

See [How Can I Cut Through Rehearsed Responses During Interviews and Learn More About These Candidates?](http://www.shrm.org/ResourcesAndTools/tools-and-samples/hr-qa/Pages/cms_021109.aspx)

(www.shrm.org/ResourcesAndTools/tools-and-samples/hr-qa/Pages/cms\_021109.aspx)

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### TAKING NOTES REGISTER NOW



There are various schools of thought on note taking during employment interviews. Some experts say it distracts the interviewer; others say that notes should be made both during and after the interview for documentation purposes. While there seems to be no consensus on this topic, many experts do advise employers to avoid the practice of writing notes directly on applications or resumes because they might be used to support an applicant's claim of discrimination. See *Is There a Problem with Writing Notes Directly on Applications or Resumes?* ([www.shrm.org/ResourcesAndTools/tools-and-samples/hr-qa/Pages/writingnotesresumes.aspx](http://www.shrm.org/ResourcesAndTools/tools-and-samples/hr-qa/Pages/writingnotesresumes.aspx))

Notes about an applicant's skills or experience that are related to the job in question can be recorded on a separate interview evaluation sheet to accomplish the goal of accurately recording information from an interview. However, notes should never be made about the physical characteristics or appearance of an applicant or any other area of potential legal liability. Note taking should be restricted to unobtrusive commentary about the applicant's qualifications and skills relative to the position.

### FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEWS

Organizations often bring certain applicants back for second or even third interviews for a number of reasons. Sometimes the employer may want to confirm that an applicant is the ideal candidate for the position, or the employer may be trying to decide between two or more qualified applicants.

An interviewer conducts first interviews to screen applicants based on their general qualifications. Once the interviewer narrows the selection to specific candidates, he or she then needs to apply additional screening methods at a follow-up interview level to further ascertain a candidate's specific qualities and potential cultural fit. A follow-up interview is also an opportunity for candidates to do further research on whether the company is an organization they want to work for.

During the follow-up interview phase, the interviewer should have specific goals in mind and may want to invite other staff members to take part in the interview.

The follow-up interview is usually the final step before extending an offer of employment to a candidate. If the candidate passes muster, the employer will then extend an offer orally and in writing.

### COMMUNICATING WITH CANDIDATES NOT SELECTED

Following up with candidates who were not selected for a position, particularly those who were interviewed, is a professional courtesy that should not be overlooked. Providing those candidates with a respectful rejection letter can maintain goodwill and increase the likelihood a candidate will consider future job openings with your company that may be a better fit. See *Why HR 'Ghosting' Wastes Company Resources* ([www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/organizational-and-employee-development/career-advice/pages/why-hr-ghosting-wastes-company-resources.aspx](http://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/organizational-and-employee-development/career-advice/pages/why-hr-ghosting-wastes-company-resources.aspx)) and *What should an employer tell a candidate who is not selected for the position?* ([www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/tools-and-samples/hr-qa/pages/whatshouldanemployertellarejectedcandidate.aspx](http://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/tools-and-samples/hr-qa/pages/whatshouldanemployertellarejectedcandidate.aspx))

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