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# the employment INTERVIEW

WITH THE MARKET showing greater signs that this current upswing might represent a sustained recovery through 2010, John Hackett thought it was a good time to re-visit a topic that many employers are currently considering, if not already undertaking.

The employment interview is a crucial component in the recruitment of new staff. While there is a tendency to focus on a candidate's performance in an interview, the employer's performance is just as important. An employer's interview approach should not be underestimated as good interview skills can assist in the assessment and selection of high quality staff.

Here are some interview guidelines that can assist in hiring the right candidate.

- Preparation is important. Read the candidate's resume before the interview to gain some familiarity with their competencies, qualifications, responsibilities and any employment gaps evident in their resume. This will also mean that time won't be wasted discussing simple information that is clearly stated in a candidate's resume.
- Compile a set of standard interview questions. Having a standard format ensures that all candidates are judged on the same criteria and also helps when comparing candidate suitability. Open-ended questions are great as they allow you to see how candidates are able to express themselves. Also, remember to listen carefully to each response. If answers are unclear or the question is being avoided, ask for further information. Ask one question at a time and allow the candidate sufficient time to answer before moving onto the next item.
- Know the interview's objectives. It is crucial to understand what the interview is attempting to identify. Do they have the attitude and skills to perform the job? Will they fit into your workplace culture? Do they have the enthusiasm and motivation to succeed in the position? How do they compare to other candidates under consideration? Objectives help frame the content of an interview, giving the employer a structured and more efficient approach when identifying suitable candidates.
- Create a friendly atmosphere. It is natural for some candidates to be a little nervous in an interview. Allow for this because you don't want to overlook a good candidate because they were anxious during the interview. Establish rapport with the candidate and attempt to

create a relaxed atmosphere. You can achieve this through a warm introduction and spending the first few minutes referring to the candidate's interests or any unique areas evident in their resume. Also, it is a good idea to inform the candidate of the interview format ahead of them so they have an idea of what to expect.

- Learn to listen. Don't dominate the conversation. Allow the candidates to sell themselves by encouraging them to do most of the talking. Be an active listener but also maintain control of the conversation to prevent answers from becoming too drawn out or getting off track.
- Sell your company. Employers need to realise that candidates are likely to be applying for other positions. Promote the positive aspects of the available position, mentioning the strengths of your company and potential for career growth and learning opportunities. It is not only what the candidate has to offer, but also what you can offer the candidate.
- Any questions? At the end of the interview, allow the candidate an opportunity to ask for further information regarding the position or your company. In addition to covering anything that was missed during the interview, it can help give an indication of their enthusiasm and knowledge of the role.
- Record your overall impression. After each interview make notes about the candidate while they are still fresh in your mind - record your overall impression of the candidates seen, assessing their presentation, personality and competence for the available position. Writing a candidate summary is a valuable tool when faced with the task of comparing candidates' suitability for the position. I hope this guideline will assist you in employing techniques that increase your skill in identifying top quality candidates for your organisation as the market continues to improve.

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