

Avoid scaring off the Talent

Practical Hints and tips to help you on your management journey

You need top staff when times are hard. Ask great questions – and don't alienate candidates.

There's no doubt that recruiting talent is one of the most critical activities for any organisation. Also that conducting the necessary interviews is one of the most difficult – often dreaded – tasks that managers have to undertake. Much of the anxiety seems to stem from confusion about choosing the questions that get the best from a candidate. Here are a few suggestions from the Chartered Management Institute that should help you get more out of your interview hour.

Ask: What is the most useful criticism that you have received? How did you address it?

Why: It gives you an idea of how aware the candidate is of their weaknesses and also how they respond to criticism or advice from colleagues and managers. How keen are they to improve?

Ask: Tell me of a time when you organised a group

Why: It offers evidence of how well they worked with others in a leadership role and also lets the candidate highlight a specific event that is important to them. What did they learn? How do they get along with others?

Ask: About which activity or interest are you most passionate?

Why: Whether they choose something work-related or a hobby, you'll be looking for someone who is able to communicate real enthusiasm and commitment, and who gets you excited about it too!

Ask: When have you ever had to change someone's mind? What did you do?

Why: By exploring a concrete example, you'll find out how the candidate interacts with others and what strategies they use to influence a colleague, team or other decision-maker.

Ask: Is there anything I can tell you about the organisation/role?

Why: You'll find out whether candidates have done their homework about your organisation and what their priorities are for the future (do they ask how quickly people get promoted, for instance?). And you'll show you care about giving them the facts that they need to join your team.

INTERVIEWERS FROM HELL?

Does one of these characters sound familiar? Don't worry – here are some easy ways to perfect your interview technique

1. **TERMINATOR** You're a tough nut who brings a professional, but perhaps scary, sense of purpose to the table. Consider that stepping back and putting the candidate at ease is more likely to let you get the best out of them.
2. **CLOCK WATCHER** It's important to keep an interview on track, but give the candidate time to think carefully and give considered answers. Let them know you are interested in what they have to say, NOT how quickly you can get on to the next interview/meeting.

3. **BEST FRIEND** You'll want to put your candidate at their ease, but that doesn't mean you have to share your candid views on the CEO! Smile, be friendly – but above all, keep it professional.
4. **INQUISITOR** Probing questions have a place, but remember you are there to sell your company as well. Give the candidate time to ask questions about the role or the organisation and show off their own preparation.
5. **SECRET SHRINK** Questions such as “what would you do if I gave you an elephant?” may get interesting responses, but what do they have to do with the job? (unless it is a job in a zoo or circus) Keep your questions simple, open-ended and relevant.

For Interview excellence – CMI's Steps in Successful Interviewing Checklist (107) (free to members) can help you to hone your approach and point the way to other useful resources. Find it online at www.managers.org.uk/managementdirect Your local CMI contact is Stanley Wallace 07841 287128 or email him at stanley.wallace@managers.org.uk.

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