

## Chapter 4

# Interviews

The employment interview is the most used and often the least valid selection device used by management. Too often interviewers are ill prepared and may be influenced by irrelevant personality factors to determine who is best for the job. That is why we suggest having more than one person interview each of the candidates. Of course, each interviewer should be trained on the “how to’s” of conducting an interview.

When interviewing candidates, it is helpful to remember the following four points:

**1. Carefully review the job description prior to the interview**

Having a detailed job description that accurately sets forth both the requirements of the position and the skills, education and background required to do the job is essential to finding the right person for the position. Additionally, it is important that the person interviewing the applicant understands what the position requires, especially if the initial interview is conducted by someone in a department other than the one in which the job opening is located.

**2. Carefully review the application form prior to interviewing**

Prior to conducting an interview, employers should review the completed application. Employers should look for unexplained lapses of employment but avoid inquiring into periods of disability. Make certain that all questions asked on the employment application have been answered (resumes should not be accepted in lieu of completed employment applications) and that the application has been signed.

**3. Ensure the interview setting is appropriate**

Ideally, an interview should be located in a comfortable location, preferably one that assures privacy (such as an office where the door can be closed). The interviewer should set the telephone to busy or request that no calls be put through during the interview and should mute the computer. Interviewers should adhere to the time set in the interview schedule, especially if interviewing more than one applicant. Additionally, the interviewee should be made as comfortable as possible and should be given the interviewer’s business card so that he/she has ready access to the interviewer’s name and position.

**4. Interview questions**

Interview questions are subject to the same cautions that accompany application questions. If it is not permissible to ask a question on an application, it is not permissible to ask it in the interview. It is important for an employer to inform interviewers about the requirements of Title VII, the ADEA, the ADA, and the Tennessee Human Rights Act and specifically detail what questions an interviewer may and may not ask. For more information, please see EEOC Enforcement Guidance on Pre-employment Disability-Related Questions and Medical Examinations, [www.eeoc.gov/policy/docs/preemp.html](http://www.eeoc.gov/policy/docs/preemp.html) and EEOC Enforcement Guidance: Workers’ Compensation and the ADA, [www.eeoc.gov/policy/docs/workcomp.html](http://www.eeoc.gov/policy/docs/workcomp.html).

## Sample interview questions

While all employers need to develop interview questions specific to the position being filled, the following general questions may help the interviewer gain insight into the applicant's personality.

- What motivates you to put forth your greatest effort?
- What criteria do you use to evaluate the organization for which you hope to work?
- What do you see as your greatest success story or accomplishment in your life so far?
- What frustrates you the most?
- Tell me about the best job you ever had and what it was that made it such a good job.
- Describe the characteristics of your best supervisor.
- What were the weaknesses of your previous supervisor?
- Give me an example of a specific problem you have faced on the job and how you solved it.
- Do you see yourself as an idea person?
- What are some ideas you've had that helped improve your job environment?
- Where do you see yourself professionally in five years?
- What do you see as the best qualities you bring to a job?
- What do you see as your weaknesses?
- Tell me about a situation in which you had to deal with a very upset customer or co-worker. What was the problem? What was the outcome?
- Give me an example of a task you've accomplished that was extremely difficult. How did you complete the task?
- When have you had to display leadership qualities?
- Do you prefer working alone or in a group?
- How would someone who knows you well describe you?

## ADA concerns

Employers are required to provide reasonable accommodations to applicants with disabilities. An employer should not engage in recruitment activities that exclude candidates with disabilities, such as participating in a job fair at a location that is not wheelchair accessible.

## **Union questions**

It is unlawful for employers to inquire about union membership, union activity, or feelings about unions generally.

## **Promises**

Interviewers should not make statements about job security or continued employment, because the applicant may construe these statements as promises that are enforceable contracts of employment. Employers may face lawsuits where they fail to provide the kind of work experience that was described in the hiring process, or they misrepresent the nature or length of employment. Interviewers should avoid predicting, promising, or guaranteeing anything about the position or the employer, and use words such as “possible,” “potential,” and “maybe” when describing career opportunities.