

Tips for a Successful Interview Process

Before the Interview

Interview Process

Before you begin interviewing, develop an assessment scale based on the job requirements and a list of criteria that can be applied to everyone. (This will assist you in assessing each candidate's responses and making a decision after the interviews.)

Interview Questions

Make sure that your questions allow all of the candidates you interview to demonstrate their qualifications for the job. Behavioural questions are especially effective: asking for specific workplace examples from their past allows candidates who may have limited Canadian experience to describe a potentially rich and varied work history from their previous countries—one that may fit beautifully with the job's requirements and bring value to your organization.

Cultural Awareness and Knowledge

Remember that many cultural values can be learned and that internationally educated professionals are often very willing to learn. Being aware of cultural influences will help you remain open, impartial, and understand the context for their responses.

The Interview

The Beginning

Consider building 15 minutes into the schedule for all candidates before the official interview begins so that they can read over the questions that they will be asked, compose their thoughts, and plan out their answers. This makes for a more useful interview all around.

Breaking the ice with small talk is a good idea. Keep in mind that your organization is being assessed right along with the candidate.

As the interview begins, you can put candidates at ease by going over what they can expect throughout the interview and by reviewing the description of what the position involves.

Research shows that gestures, body language, and speaking style can account for over ninety percent of a first impression. Be aware of this area for potential bias so that you can find the best candidate for the job, someone with the knowledge, skills and abilities needed.

During the Interview

Be sure to speak at a normal speed with simple sentences, avoiding using jargon. Make the questions short and straightforward instead of trying to cover several points in one long question.

Ask each question in sequence, and avoid jumping around. Sticking to one topic at a time allows the candidate to understand the context of what you're saying. Give the candidates permission to ask questions; this helps them to do their best so you can get an accurate picture of their suitability for the position.

Allow time for your candidates to formulate their responses. If you hear a confusing or unexpected answer, the candidate may have simply misunderstood you. Be prepared to rephrase your question.

Ask for examples of past work experiences. This will allow you to get a clearer picture of what candidate are capable of, giving them a chance to truly show their competencies.

Listen effectively. If you don't hear or understand a word or phrase, ask for clarification. If a response sounds unusual or unexpected, validate what you heard. Try to listen past errors, focusing on the intended meaning. Monitor yourself to make sure you're remaining engaged and not tuning out.

All of this will help to ensure that you don't overlook someone for reasons unrelated to the job.

After the Interview

Finishing Well

The end of an interview should be as well-ordered as the beginning and the middle. Make sure you've left enough time for any questions the candidate may have. Go over the steps you'll be taking from this point on and how long your decision making process will likely take. Try to end things on a positive note, especially if this is a strong candidate.

The Assessment

While the interview is still fresh in your mind, it's time to itemize your impressions using the assessment scale you created at the beginning of the interview process.

We all have built-in biases that can prevent us from assessing a candidate objectively, such as:

Primacy Bias — This refers to the tendency to make a decision within the first few minutes of an interview.

Similar to Me Bias — This involves the practice of hiring people who are similar to us.

Halo Effect — Someone gets a high score on all skills when they possess just one skill, but a skill we value highly.

Strictness Bias — Someone is rated lower on all skills because they don't possess one particular skill we're looking for the most.

Demographic Bias — Assessments that are made based on stereotypes, which may or may not be accurate i.e. an interviewee from a culture that values independent accomplishment is assumed to be a poor team player.