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Ask the Right Questions: Get the Most Out of Your Job Candidate Interviews

By BSM Consulting®

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The essence of the interview process is to gain insights into the candidate that are not readily available from the resume. Effective, well-thought-out interview questions are a critical element of a successful interview. This article provides a sampling of questions commonly used in telephone and personal interviews with candidates.

The types of questions you may ask during a job interview are limited by law, but you are not precluded from an in-depth discussion to obtain the job-related information you need.

Sample Questions

Below are sample questions to help conduct the interview.

- How much do you know about our practice?
- What are the main reasons you're interested in this position?
- What did you like best about your prior jobs?
- Which of your prior jobs was your favorite and why?
- What things would you prefer to avoid in your next job?
- What characteristics of a coworker do you find most difficult to work with?
- What am I likely to discover about you six months from now that won't be obvious from our interview?
- What do you consider to be your greatest personal disappointment in the workplace and why? Your greatest success and why?
- What are your references likely to tell me about your strengths? Your weaknesses?
- What are your long-term career goals? How does this position fit into those goals?
- Tell me about the worst interpersonal conflict you've ever had with a coworker or supervisor. How were matters resolved?
- What aspects of the workplace tend to make you feel most stressed?
- Some people need constant change around them while others prefer things to remain constant. How would you describe your feelings about this?
- Describe for me how you would make a tuna sandwich. (This type of question provides insights into the candidate's orientation to detail, process, chronological order, sense of humor, verbal and interpersonal skills, and composure in unexpected circumstances.)
- Who was your most influential coworker and why?
- How would you rate your level of intelligence compared with most supervisors you've had?
- What do you see as the key principles involved in motivating improved performance? (for supervisory candidates)
- How important to you are friendships among coworkers?

Behavioral Interviewing

Many companies use a technique known as behavioral interviewing, which is based on the belief that past behavior is the best predictor of future behavior. Following are examples of behavioral questions.

- Assess your perceived strengths and weaknesses. Responses will provide insights into the applicant's ability to self-assess and receive constructive criticism. Other clarifying questions could be, "How would others rank your strengths and weaknesses?" or "What have you done to improve upon your weaknesses?"
- How would you describe the workplace-related needs of an average employee? How would you address those needs as a supervisor? (for supervisory candidates)
- In past situations, how have you handled disagreements with coworkers? This question will provide clues about adaptability and working in a team environment.
- Describe a new policy or procedure you instituted or embraced in a recent job position? This answer will show an applicant's initiative, leadership, adaptability, and decision-making skills.

Answers to these questions should assist in determining the candidate's ability to fill your job opening and help you get to know the candidate.



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