

# Let's Get Interview Ready



Although it can seem daunting, preparing to meet with your candidates is pretty straight-forward if you plan ahead. To make it even easier, we've prepared this guide to arranging and conducting effective interviews.

We'll show you the steps to put in place for before, during and after your meeting. As importantly, we'll let you know exactly what you can and cannot ask questions about. We're always here to help you.



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# Developing a Position Description

Imagine you're going house-hunting. No doubt, you would have a list of features and room sizes that you were looking for, based on the needs of your family and lifestyle. It's no different when you draw up your wish-list for new staff. A good Position Description enables you to concisely set out the responsibilities inherent in the role. From this, you can determine the skills, experience and accreditations needed by someone to effectively manage it. Furthermore, it will bring structure to your interviews and make sure potential candidates are fully informed of just what the job covers, reducing the chances of a bad hiring decision. Here are some of the key things to include:



- Salary Package Available
- Annual Leave and Terms
- Probation & Review Period
- Regular Hours Of Work
- Travel Requirements
- Location
- Position Summary & Objectives
- Qualifications
- Education
- Accreditations
- Experience
- Level of Responsibility
- Supervisory Responsibilities
- Key Responsibilities
- Financial Management
- Performance Management
- Key Performance Indicators

The Position Description effectively 'doubles-up' as the foundation of any offer of employment to the right candidate, saving you valuable time at the end of the recruitment process.

# What Shouldn't You Discuss?



The best way to develop a questionnaire is to first know what topics are off-limit. With this in mind, it's important that you refrain from asking questions which can be viewed as having a discriminatory purpose.

For instance, asking a candidate a question such as 'what country were you born in?' doesn't mean that you are intending to 'hold it against them'. It can however be construed that way.

Obviously, some questions need to be asked that are relevant to the role and depending on the circumstances, may be particular to gender for example. There are also 'duty-of-care' considerations to be made. If you're uncertain, we recommend you seek further advice.

Here is a list of items you're not allowed to mention or make judgements upon:

Race, Colour or Ethnicity, Religion or Beliefs, Sex or Sexual Orientation, Pregnancy or Plans For Children, Political Opinions, Age or Marital Status, Disabilities or Illnesses, Family Responsibilities.

*To illustrate things further, here are some examples of 'off-limits' questions:*

'Which Religion are you?'

'How many children do you plan on having and when?'

'Who did you vote for in the last election?'

'What's your opinion on Gay Marriage?'

The simple rule of thumb is this : If you're unsure, don't ask.

# Setting The Scene Is Important



It's important to recognise that the recruitment process is a two-way street in which both parties are equally invested. Employers who still believe that 'they are lucky to have a job here' are probably finding it harder to attract and maintain their staff. Times change and so do attitudes in the workplace.

Consider this: When you visit or speak with your clients and suppliers, you like to be made to feel welcome and important to them: So why not do the same for the people you invite for an interview? Imagine a slightly nervous candidate walking into a strange environment. Now think how nice it would be if, before they had the chance to say who they were the person greeting them said 'Hello, you must be Sarah?'

Here are a few key steps to help you 'Set The Scene'.

- Make sure that the interview room is well ventilated, preferably with a window and ensure that drinking water is available.
- In both 'one-on-one' and 'panel' interviews, always sit across the desk or table from the candidate.
- If a candidate appears to be nervous, let them know that there's nothing to worry about and put them at ease.
- Try not to dominate the conversation and offer them plenty of opportunity to contribute their thoughts and opinions.
- Ask the candidate if they have anything of value or importance to add to the discussion.
- If the interview went well, introduce the applicant to the people they will work with, especially the person they will answer to in the new role.
- Show the candidate their working environment, desk location, kitchen and amenities.

# Technical & Personal Factors

There's an old adage within the Recruitment Sector: People are hired for their skills and experience but they usually leave for social and personal reasons. What does this mean? In short, it tells you that not only does the candidate need to be able to manage the everyday responsibilities of the role, they also need to be able to work harmoniously within your existing team.

Are 'second interviews' worth having? The answer is 'yes'. If they cover off on different aspects of the process. Traditionally, the interviewee used to be moved 'up the chain of command' and asked the same set of questions by two or more people. If you think about it, this is a real waste of time and there's not a lot of knowledge to be gleaned by either party.

We recommend that your initial meeting could be conducted formally to cover off on the more technical, skill-based aspects of the role. Use the Position Description as a starting point and make sure you have a question that covers off on each item. It also helps to break down particular aspects into categories. We would recommend that you determine which skills and attributes are desirable and which are essential. This will also highlight possible training requirements for the candidate.



Your second meeting with a competent, short-listed candidate, could be to join your staff for an informal cup of coffee. In this environment, the candidate will relax and you'll get a clearer picture and indication of how they'll fit in with your team. They'll also be familiar with their working environment and more comfortable making a decision.

# Good Questions = Good Answers

Before you conduct your interview, review the Position Description and ask yourself: 'What questions do I need to ask, to get the answers to these questions?' It might sound simple, but that's a great place to start.

Another great thing to do is ask 'Open Questions' – What are these? Well, open questions are designed to improve the flow and quality of information. For example, if you ask an Accounts Person 'Are you good at managing accounts?' their answer is either 'yes' or 'no'. If you re-phrase this question to ask 'tell me how you manage your accounts and why?' it means the interviewee will need to give greater consideration to their response and you'll benefit from a more expansive answer.

You'll need to tailor some of your questions to the specific skills and experience needed to manage the role. You can do this by asking them to detail specific achievements.

*To get a greater insight into their personality and preferences, why not ask them:*

'What do you like and dislike most about your current/previous job?'

'What aspect of the job do you need to improve upon?'

'What would your colleagues say about you?'

'What kind of team environment are you happiest in?'

'What achievement in the workplace have you been most proud of and why?'

These questions are important. For example, if you're interviewing someone for a busy Receptionist role and they say that the thing they dislike most about their current role is answering the 'phone, you've immediately determined that this is not the right person for the job.



# Don't Let The Right One Slip Away

What do great candidates and great houses have in common? They don't seem to be on the market for very long. Before you go house hunting, you'll know just how much you're prepared to offer for the right place. This means that not only can you stay within your budget, but you can 'strike while the iron's hot' if you find your dream home. It shouldn't be any different when considering an offer for a great candidate.

We're certainly not saying that you should make an offer to the first suitable person you meet, but you should make sure you've covered off on all of the financial and administrative aspects of proceeding to an offer. This includes having a pro-forma document ready and waiting for you to just add the personal details to it. It could even reflect on the Position Description for the role.

You'd be amazed to hear that after waiting to find the ideal person, some employers lose them to their competitors for the sake of a little time preparing the offer in advance. Regardless of the economy, the best people will typically be considering more than one offer of employment. In short, you have to be in it, to win it.

Do you still have some  
questions for us?

Is so, call today on  
**08 9474 7774**

We're always  
here to help.



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