



HIRING INTERVIEW GUIDE

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Chapter 1 - LEGAL MISTAKES THAT CAN HAVE SIGNIFICANT CONSEQUENCES

Everyone involved in the hiring process should know that there are questions you must never ask during a job interview. Employment laws in the US are significantly more stringent than in most European countries, so it is crucial to understand these legal pitfalls.

It is illegal to ask a candidate about:

- Age
- Gender
- Marital status
- Pregnancy or plans to have children
- Health conditions
- Sexual orientation
- Or any personal consideration that could bias your assessment of the candidate

Additionally, in Massachusetts, it is now illegal to ask candidates about current and past salary, or to request this information from current or former employers --unless an offer has already been made to the candidate, and the candidate has formally given approval for doing so.

Asking such questions and then rejecting the candidates is an excellent way to invite a discrimination lawsuit with the potential for significant financial consequences, along with the scrutiny of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission of the Justice Department.

Chapter 2 - BEST PRACTICES FOR THE HIRING INTERVIEW

1 - Explain Your Hiring Process

To ease the tension and create an atmosphere of transparency, begin by telling candidates about your company's interview process. Be specific, with details, such as:

- Whether you are inviting them for a first or final interview
- Whom the candidate will meet
- What role those people will play in the decision-making process
- What tests will be given or required
- How long the candidate can be expected to be on the premises, directions, parking, etc.



2 - Find Reasons to Say ‘Yes,’ Not ‘No’

Keep an open, positive mind to the candidate’s potential fit. If you want to find a reason NOT to hire someone, you will always be able to do so. Instead of trying to find reasons why hiring a certain candidate won’t work, try to find reasons why it COULD work.

3 - Always Be Selling

After being honest--ONCE--about the possible challenges, keep in mind that you are selling your company during the interview. You want to play up the advantages of working for your organization during this time. Don’t turn candidates off.

4 - Get Candidates to Relax And Reveal

Don’t make a job interview feel like an interrogation. It should be more like a friendly conversation to get to know a possible future team member. Don’t cross your arms. Present an open stance, be relaxed, smile a lot, and get candidates to talk about something else besides their resumes and job experience. People reveal more about themselves and their character when they are relaxed.

5 - Don’t Believe Everything You Read on a Résumé

The statistics are well known: More than half the résumés submitted contain information that isn’t entirely true. Or at least some facts have been embellished. How to smoke out the real truth? Two ways:

- Focus on what the résumé DOESN’T say as much as on what it does say. Are there gaps in the résumé? The candidate could be trying to omit an employer who will give a bad reference because he was fired for stealing or some other offense.
- More likely, the candidate may have overblown his or her role in a project or in specific achievements. A résumé entry like “Led new customer service initiative” may mean no more than having stood at the door and handed out surveys. To ferret out the truth, ask candidates what they actually did on a job or a project, and encourage them to be as specific as possible.

6 - Play the Movie Forward, Not Backward

Many hiring managers start asking candidates to describe their last job, which is logical because it’s probably what prepared the candidate most for the current job for which you’re considering him or her. The candidate comes prepared to talk about that job, so you will probably get well-rehearsed and embellished answers.

This is counter-intuitive, but you might learn more if you ask the candidate to start with the FIRST relevant job they ever had. It may well have been a formative experience, and the candidate doesn’t expect the question – so you’re likely to get more candid answers.

7 - Ask About Real Achievements, Not Hypothetical Ones

Don’t try to paint a picture of situations the candidate would encounter on the job if he or she would be fortunate enough to get hired and then ask what the future employee would do when faced with such circumstances. Candidate will surely tell you what they think you want to hear. Hypothetical questions and answers have little value in predicting future behavior.



It is much better to learn what the candidate did in a previous position. Try to find a close analogy with the possible future job, and ask the candidate what he or she actually did in a similar circumstance.

8 - Learn How Much They Want the Job

The worst thing that can happen is that you make a firm job offer, and the candidate runs to his or her current employer – or another possible future employer – and asks them to match or improve your offer, thus negotiating a better deal somewhere else.

Always try to find out how interested the candidate is in really taking your job. Are they likely to get a counter-offer from their current employer? If such, you may want to suspend the interview until they have decided that they really want to work at your company.

9 - Get Them to Do the Talking

You are selling the advantages of working for your company, so you do want to answer their questions about your company and the job being discussed. But be careful not to do too much of the talking. You want the candidate to do most of the talking.

One way to achieve that is to constantly ask for feedback from the candidate:

- “How does that sound to you?”
- “What are you hearing me say?”
- “After hearing this, tell us why you would want to work here and why you would be a good fit,” etc.

10 - Invite Them to Ask Questions – And Listen Carefully to What They Ask

You often learn more from the questions the candidates ask of you than from the answers they give to your questions, which often are well rehearsed. Example: “My main shortcoming is that I tend to work too hard.” Invite them to ask many questions, urging them on if necessary with a “Come on, you must be curious about this place and what it’s like to work here. Ask away. Let us help fill you in.”

If they ask only about the hours and the pay, that tells you a lot. You probably don’t want them. They’re likely to be clock-watchers, and all they want is a paycheck. You want people who really think your company is exactly the place they want to work.

Chapter 3 - THE 10 INTERVIEW QUESTIONS THAT MAY UNCOVER 'RED FLAGS'

1. How was your commute? Will your commuting time be acceptable during rush hours?

How far people are willing to commute varies wildly. A few people are willing to travel for over an hour, while others think 30 minutes is too long. However, lengthy commutes are among the major reasons for turnover. Therefore, be aware that candidates who travel long distances might be poor prospects long-term.



2. What do you do for fun?

It's a good question to help you discover if a candidate can get really passionate about something.

3. What do you already know about our company?

You may assume everyone has Googled your company's name – if they haven't, you probably don't want them. As a follow-up question, you may ask: What else would you like to know? Is there anything that you really like, or anything that gives you pause?

4. Where do you see yourself being two years from now? Five years from now?

You'll get an idea of how ambitious they are and/or how realistic they are.

5. Tell me about a recent time when you had a substantial disagreement with your direct supervisor.

To probe on conflict resolution skills, or lack thereof. You'll know if the candidate gets overly emotional or overly excited when describing the conflict. Follow-up questions may be: How was it resolved? Now that you have the benefit of hindsight, in retrospect, who was right?

6. Tell me about a business success you're really proud of.

Managing failures is key; managing successes is, too. You'll get a sense of how the candidate thinks about achievement, and how much his/her vision aligns with your own culture. Follow-up questions may be: What do you think were some of the components that led to the success? Was it a team effort? Could you have done it alone?

7. Tell me about the last time you made a significant mistake. What did you learn from the experience?

Everyone has made mistakes. If the job applicant says he hasn't, then think twice before hiring.

8. Why do you want to work here?

If the candidate answers, "to earn the good salary that you posted," you probably don't want him or her.

9. If we talked to your last supervisor, what do you think they would say about you?

Follow-up questions may be: What would they say about your outstanding qualities? What shortcomings would they probably point out?

10. Where else have you applied and where else did you get past the front door?

It is essential to get a sense of how much the candidate is on an active job search, who you are competing with, and how much they value your job opportunity. Follow-up questions may be: How do we compare? Where does this opportunity rank in your mind? Where are we on a scale of 1 to 10? What would it take for us to be a 10?