The Insider's Guide

To

Candidate Selection

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The Insider's Guide To Candidate Selection

By Kevin Buckley

Dedication

For Anna

Side by Side

The Insider's Guide To Candidate Selection

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Foreword

In today's marketplace, whenever you post a position, you receive dozens or hundreds of applications. Sorting through these applications, and deciding which are suitable for follow up is a very time-consuming and frustrating

process. I often hear clients asking: Why am I receiving so many ad responses but so few quality responses, and how can I quickly narrow down the focus on those candidates that I want to consider?

The Insider's Guide To Candidate Selection is written from the perspective of many years of recruitment experience, and placing people at all levels of decision-making. It is a guide to assist you in sorting through the array of responses that you receive, and to save you time and effort.

With candidates, their resumes and cover letters, and the references that they provide, everything is not always as it seems. Interviewing is a learned skill, and some candidates can be very effective in making a positive impression on the interviewer. With every new person hired, you make a significant investment of time and resources.

This Guide helps to focus your attention on the candidates you want through applying simple, proven techniques to identify good prospects.

Chapter I

Email Messages, Cover Letters, And Resumes

Posting your positions

To eliminate most of the overseas applications that you receive from people desiring to immigrate, and who possess no local experience, insert or highlight a note that only local, resident candidates with the applicable working papers are eligible for consideration. If overseas candidates do not see this specific declaration, they may send their resumes for review, potentially adding to your workload.

Many candidates overseas erroneously assume that they can apply to all positions, without having to submit to normal immigration procedures, or they expect that a company can obtain a working visa for them. In special cases, a company can do this, if the candidate has a unique skillset, or their

experience is in high demand. This does not apply to the majority of positions posted.

Clearly written job duties, expectations and qualifications help you to narrow the focus on those candidates that you want to hear from. Conversely, vague and inaccurate descriptions will draw applicants with vague and unrelated backgrounds. This will lead to congestion in your inbox. Carefully edit your posting to reflect exactly the qualifications, experience, skills, aptitudes, industry education, and training that you want to see.

Including the salary range for the position is an option. Many employers leave salary figures out. The advantage of noting salary ranges? Most of the people choosing to apply will be within the salary range quoted. If you don't include salary information, you may receive more responses. The potential drawback is that some of these applicants will be above or below your target range. This will mean more time spent qualifying applicants for further consideration. The advantage gained in keeping the salary area open? You will have more people to potentially choose from. This is helpful if you want to bracket candidates earning slightly below, or somewhat above, your preferred salary range.

Avoid unusual or odd position titles. You want your title to clearly reflect the gist of the position's duties. If you are hiring a newly created position, and you are unsure of what title to use, enter the position duties keywords in Google; see what variations of the title come up in the search results. You can also contact an industry association or recruitment specialist focused in a particular sector for their opinions on choosing an appropriate position title.

Many positions are posted with lackluster text; this does little to attract the type of career-oriented person that you want to hire.

Incorporate your expectations into the job description; avoid posting a dry list of job duties:

- Handling documentation
- Dealing with customers
- Preparing reports

This list has more appeal because it uses descriptive words:

- Preparing a wide variety of detailed documents with a focus on accuracy
- Solving customer problems in a proactive and professional manner
- Presenting well organized reports for review by senior management

Insert key phrases that clearly express your expectations of performance; this helps to attract the candidates who identify with those qualities, skills, and attributes. If you are unsure what industry terminology to use, consult with a senior employee in the department, or the department manager. If no position description exists on file, consider contacting industry associations or specialist recruiters for their input. You can find position descriptions online as well, to serve as a template.

The Candidate's Email

What does the candidate's approach by email tell you about the quality of the candidate, their fitness for the position, and the prospects for shortlisting them for consideration?

The best candidates explain why they are writing to you. They layout, briefly, the logical reasons they should be considered for the position posted. They will include contact information, and will invite further discussion. Their messages will reflect some or all the hiring criteria in the position that is posted. Common points of mutual interest are usually evident. The overall impressions received are: organized, logical, concise, and relevant communications.

A blank message accompanying a resume says nothing about the writer. Often, you receive these messages from people who are sending out numerous applications. Some people send blank message applications to every position that holds even the slightest interest for them. They believe

that if you send out many applications - qualified or not for the job - you will eventually secure a job through working with the law of averages.

Sometimes, the writer is in an entirely different industry. Set aside applications with no text at all in the message. These can also be viruses masquerading as legitimate emails. These messages may include attachments with odd file formats. Check what kind of attachment is in the email. Be careful of zip files, and any file formats that are not standard document formats: PDF, TXT, RTF, DOC, DOCKX.

Ten Negative Signs in An Email Message

- The email name is too casual, uses slang terms, or suggests immaturity.
- The display name of their email in your Inbox is just a first name, no last name.
- The message itself is completely blank, giving no information.
- The email message is very long, with emotional words in the text.
- No industry-specific credentials or experience are noted in the message.
- The experience level noted is very over or under qualified for the job.
- There are spelling and grammar errors, and poor sentence structure.
- There are many attachments, making for a large-sized message.
- The text of the message appears to apply to a different job than the one you have posted, indicating a generic or 'canned' approach.
- There is a strong sense of urgency - 'you must interview me' attitude.

Ten Positive Signs Of A Good Email Message

- The message is clear, focused, and relevant to the position requirements.
- A logical case is made for the candidate’s further consideration.
- The experience level approaches or matches your expectations.
- Specific industry courses, terms, and concepts are found in the text.
- A telephone contact or two are provided for further follow up.
- The email name is the candidate's name, not an alias.
- The email message contains a pasted copy of the resume text for easy

access and review.
- Specific times and availability are noted, along with the contact numbers.
- There are no glaring spelling or grammar errors in the text.
- Employment references will be provided upon request is noted

Cover Letters, Resumes, and Misrepresentation

What are some signals that you should be alert to?

Cover Letter Warning Signs

Cover letters, both email and paper versions, tell you a lot about the candidate's education, suitability, and general motivation. A clear and focused document is often the product of a clear and focused mind. Are there spelling errors, evident grammar errors, or awkward verbal structures used? Carelessness shown in such an important document may indicate a general attitude towards work and essential details.

- Is the cover letter objective, or does it read as a purely subjective selling tool?
- What does the candidate's letter say about their objective - a reason they are writing to you?
- Is the career objective stated in the cover letter realistic?
- How does their objective compare to the candidate's overall experience, track record, and educational level?
- Is their background relevant to the needs of the position?
- Do you find yourself scratching your head, and wondering why the candidate is writing to you?

Be wary of emotional appeals, and very subjective comments about past employers. People sometimes use emotional appeals to obligate the reader into doing something for them. Other people will mirror the text of the employment posting in their message, touching on the key hiring criteria, to create a basis for common interest with the reader. These claims to being qualified need to be supported by evidence in the candidate's resume, to

warrant your time and attention.

Key Warning Signs In A Cover Letter or Message

- You need to scroll a long, long way to get to the end of the message.
- Emotional appeals and subjective terms are used to persuade or manipulate you.
- Grievances with past or present employers are mentioned.
- The tone of the letter is one of being victimized by people or companies.
- There is little relevance between their work experience and your needs.
- Competence is claimed despite the clear lack of industry credentials.
- The hiring criteria are mirrored in the text of the message.
- The general impression is confused, unclear or unfocused thinking.

Resumes And What They Tell You

Some resumes have immediate appeal, are well constructed and very informative.These resumes can also be the product of specialized programs or resume writing services. The candidate may not have written the resume, personally. How do you separate the chaff from the grain, and the truth from the fabrications?

First, do an internal search of the candidate’s name, to see if a prior resume was sent for a previously posted position. If you find an earlier resume, do the employment dates match in both documents? Do you find two or three documents with different dates, different companies, and different time frames of employment?

Next, do a Google search on the person's name and title, and see what comes up on LinkedIn or other business social media. Compare the dates on the resume and what is posted on LinkedIn; do they match? Are there large gaps in the employment history, and are these gaps explained?

Is there an actual degree noted for a given academic program? Or, is there a

notation that the degree's requirements were incomplete, with only a certain number of courses taken towards the achievement of the degree? Some people may claim full academic qualifications, to increase their appeal to a potential employer. When you follow up, ask them whether they graduated from this college or that university, as a clear question to which they must answer yes, or no.

This gives you a specific statement of fact. Be alert to hemming and hawing, or hesitation in providing a direct answer to you, or any fast talking explanations regarding why they did or didn't graduate. Ask them to bring a photocopy of the graduate degree or diploma to the interview with you, to establish the truth of their claim.

A lengthy resume takes a long time to read, and requires significant concentration. A very short resume may indicate a lack of interest or care taken to produce it; or that the writer doesn't have a track record to point to. Sometimes, the writer hasn't created a resume before. This can apply to new graduates, or student resumes, where the person really doesn’t have much business experience to speak of.

Some resumes have multiple fonts, multiple colors, and unusual diagrams, or pictures in them. While multiple fonts and colors are very suitable in a graphic arts work setting, or other creative media sector, most general business people stay with black text for resumes.

Look at the person's email address. If you see an offensive or highly unusual or unprofessional email name on the document, like slacker@hotmail.com, for example, this tells you something about the writer, their activities, or level of maturity. Enter their email address into Google, and see what comes back. If that email address is associated with unsavory behavior, Internet complaints or bad reviews, this is useful for you to know.

Some people make the mistake of using their long-term personal email to send job applications from. Is the email originating from a company or employer account? The candidate using company time and resources to send their resume to you raises a red flag. On the other hand, sometimes a

company which is going out of business will allow employees to use company email to apply for jobs. This latter point can be easily checked with the candidate, in due course.

Reasons For Leaving Past Employers

This is an important area to examine on a resume. What is the writer saying about why they left their previous employers? Pay special attention to remarks such as: 'didn't see eye to eye with the company'; 'the company and I were going in different directions,' or, 'I left because I was being under appreciated,' and so on. Many people say they were restructured or downsized. This can cover a multitude of reasons why the person left.

In the follow up with the candidate, ask for clarification, and precise reasons why the person left, or was asked to leave the employer. When asked about this, listen to how the question is answered. Is there tension in the candidate's voice? Are they apologetic? Are they defensive and/or aggressive in tone?

These reactions can indicate a problem with the real reason underlying why the person left. These unresolved negative feelings could be masked in an interview. If they are working through feelings of anger, these may comunnicate to you when you probe sensitive subjects.

Do the employer references match to the companies that the candidate worked at? If the references noted have no relation to the prior companies worked with, what type of references are they? Often, if there are no valid past employment references to offer, the candidate will note personal references such as police officers, church leaders, and people who are not directly related to past employers.

People do lose touch over time, so do not assume that valid, past employer references aren't available, in due course. Sometimes, the candidate must track down employer references from the past for you.

Some candidates have a lot of community involvement, and will also include

these personal references, along with past employer references. These candidates will also tend to have sufficient past employment references as their primary contacts. Exercise caution if the candidate has a long employment history, with multiple jobs, combined with no employment references, yet offers numerous personal, character references.

What Good Candidate Resumes Share In Common

Good candidates resumes are laid out in a logical sequence, and are edited so that every word and phrase is carefully selected. This careful editing results in a maximum, positive impact on the reader. The references contacts are former superiors at the same companies that the candidate worked at. The telephone numbers are current because the candidate has stayed in touch with past employers.

The job objectives are clearly defined. In the skills summary section, concise points are noted on their qualifications, skills, abilities, aptitudes, and knowledge. Candidates who have achieved certain goals know what those objectives were, how they accomplished them, and what the measurable results were.

They illustrate the before and after scenarios; showing their personal contributions to the organization, or the department; improved results, increased profits, and reduced costs. They note relevant and concise points under each employment period. These points also serve as a context to discuss their experience when they meet with you.

You want to see projects accomplished, cost reductions realized, new sales growth achieved, new products and services launched, and so on. You don't want to see a sterile list of job duties only. You want to see what kind of impact they had when they worked at a given company. You don't want to see the same position description repeated for three different jobs in three different companies.

What evidence exists of their progress and advancement? You also want to

see convincing evidence of increased responsibilities and accountability. Some candidates inflate their position titles. It sounds more important to be a manager, but what did they manage? The vice president of a major corporation, and the vice president in a two-person company, operate in very different environments, and have very different employment experiences.

If they claim a management or supervisory title, define their actual responsibility.

- How many people did they manage or supervise?
- How long did they have this responsibility; when were they promoted?
- How much decision-making authority did they have?

Spellcheck and manual reviews of the resume text should catch resume spelling mistakes before the resume is sent to you. If you find more than one or two of these types of errors, exercise caution because this person may not be attentive to important details. Neglecting details often results in costing companies money through careless mistakes made.

Twelve Warning Signs - Resume Content

- The dates of employment overlap, or lack continuity.
- There are large, unexplained gaps in the employment history.
- The companies and dates worked differ from the LinkedIn profile.
- The Education section is missing, incomplete, or irrelevant.
- The position descriptions are identical from one company to the next.
- The resume goes on for four or five pages, and is difficult to navigate.
- Reasons for leaving suggest a person prone to conflict with others.
- References noted are not past superiors from companies worked in.
- Many personal interests are noted that eclipse the actual business duties.
- Questionable figures and results are claimed as achievements.
- Job-hopping from one level of responsibility to the next is evident.
- Short tenures are the norm, with many jobs worked in a few short years.

- Spelling, grammar, and general language skills are questionable.

Sometimes, a very long resume indicates a person who is pedantic or long-winded. However, sometimes a very long resume indicates that a person has an unusually accomplished working history, and very extensive achievements. Everything needs to be taken in context.

Gather your impressions to make an informed decision.

Chapter II

Background-Checking, Resumes, And Reference Issues

What are some of the items of interest to note when reviewing the candidate's employment track record, and verifying their background details? The resume is thefirst tool to verify the candidate's track record, or uncover work information discrepancies in their past. Provide the resume to the background-checking firm. Supply the documents they need to do a thorough job.

Instruct the background-checking firm to verify employment dates, academic degrees noted, reasons for leaving, and any other relevant information that you require to make a hiring decision. Clearly itemize the points and issues that you want to explore. Some firms will only perform a minimal check, unless you spell out exactly what you want to verify.

Generally, you must obtain permission from the candidate to have information released to the background-checking organization. This candidate consent is generally obtained in writing. This involves signing a release or consent form. Some employers include this in their general application forms; other employers have the background firm handle this procedure. Either way, inform the candidate of your intentions, and your standard hiring procedures.

Compare the results of the background check with information on LinkedIn,

information on the resume, and the feedback received from employer references. Are all parties on the same page, or is there a jarring note in one area, or from one person, contradicting the positives received from other quarters?

Good background checkers are very thorough in their approach. They contact colleges and universities, and verify that this person did indeed graduate in the year that they claimed. They double-check with past employers the employment dates, and the reasons for leaving. They verify that the employment reference contacts are valid and relevant to the employee's work history and experience.

Education is the section that is most often 'tweaked' on a resume. This can range from claiming high school graduation, to claiming degrees earned, when only certain required courses were completed.

Criminal and security oriented background checks are much more common now. The candidates themselves can supply some of this information. Have them obtain reports from regional police authorities; confirm that there are no convictions on the candidate's public record. If a candidate hesitates to obtain this prior conviction report for you, inform the background-checking firm to pay special attention to this issue.

Inform the candidate that a background check is a normal procedure. Impress upon them the importance of their honesty because everything submitted to you is subject to verification. A candidate with something to hide is more likely to back out of the process when a background check is part of the hiring procedure.

Thorough checks are vital when hiring a person in a position of trust. Government agencies and licensing authorities insist on proof of a person's ability to be bonded. They must pass rigorous security checks as well in many industry sectors. The higher the level of responsibility and sensitivity of information that the candidate handles, the more important it is to conduct thorough background screening.

Seven Items To Consider With A Background-Checking Firm

- Verify the claims of degrees and diplomas received.
- Check Employment dates and items of the work history.
- Verify titles claimed and the duties related to them.
- Research past Convictions for felonies and misdemeanors, including traffic tickets.
- Establish accurate Reference contact titles and their working relationship to the candidate.
- Review Social media profiles, and the information on Facebook and LinkedIn.
- Call Credit bureaus to verify that the candidates honor their obligations.

Different jurisdictions have different privacy legislation; it is important to know rights and obligations in your area, and ensure that the candidate is aware of them. Background checks can be conducted at various stages of the hiring process; including the job application stage, the offer or conditional offer stage, even during the probationary period, as part of the hiring agreement.

Check with your legal counsel to obtain guidance on updated legislation on this issue.

When A Reference Isn't A Real Reference

How do you verify the truth of the employment reference given to you, and avoid the incomplete or misleading 'buddy' reference? References are a sensitive area, and there are legal implications in conducting them. Some firms perform only a cursory review with a reference, and then they move on to the next task in the process.

If you use an employment firm, be specific about the information that you want, and the type of feedback that you want to receive. The standard reference questions that deal with punctuality, verifying employment dates, position level, and so on, are one level of reference checking.

At a higher level, you determine the person's actual reasons for leaving their employer; how the company views them, what specific contributions they made while they were employed there, and the attitudes and degree of cooperation that they displayed in accomplishing their daily duties.

If the person did not get along with their direct reporting superior, they will sometimes offer an alternate reference. This can be a manager that they worked with frequently in the same company. The key point here is: To what degree did this person work with the alternate reference on a daily basis? If it was only an occasional involvement, then the quality or completeness of the reference is affected by that fact. If there was extensive involvement, daily, with this alternate reference, then that alternate reference may offer some valuable insight.

If a person does not have a valid reference from their immediate reporting superior, or an alternate manager reference, sometimes you get what is termed a 'buddy reference'. A buddy reference is someone who worked in the same department, but in a non-managerial or non-supervisory capacity, side-by-side, along with the candidate. This type of reference is a friendly and supportive one, but you receive no confirmation of the candidate's abilities or achievements from a manager or supervisor's perspectives.

Avoid a situation where a telephone number is given to you, likely a cell number, or the candidate offers to have someone call you directly to provide the reference. Some unscrupulous people have friends pose as former managers or supervisors. You need to be careful about this. Verify that the telephone number of the reference is indeed a legitimate business number, or otherwise directly linked to an actual, former, direct superior.

Social Media Warning Signs - Facebook and LinkedIn Profiles

With the coming of social media, more and more companies review online profiles to assist in decision-making when hiring candidates. These social media sites are a gold mine of information, providing clues about a candidate's level of maturity, potential prejudices, personality issues, and

other traits.

Facebook shows a candidate in socially unguarded moments. Review the candidate's public profile and wall comments. How about their pictures posted online? Do you see signs of irresponsible behavior, or conduct that could potentially affect how they perform their duties, and the reputation of your company? Different companies have different values and ethics. How well does the candidate's conduct on a site like Facebook fit in with your company's mission statement, public image, and general values and ethics?

What do you do if you see embarrassing conduct on a site like Facebook that appears to be totally at odds with the candidate's personal presentation in an interview? Until the courts clarify such matters because they are new elements in the hiring process, be prudent; seek input from your fellow managers, and your legal or human resources department. What are their recommendations?

Look at the candidate's LinkedIn profile. What do other industry associates, former superiors and co-workers say about this person? How valid are the recommendations noted that you often find on people's profiles on LinkedIn? Do you see many buddy references or recommendations? How appropriate are the business Groups that the candidate has joined on LinkedIn? You want to see Groups that are widely recognized in your industry. If you can view the candidate's Connections, whom are they connected to, and do these connections have strong industry credentials?

Does the LinkedIn profile contain careless spelling or grammatical errors? How does this compare with the candidate's resume? How does the profile picture look? Does this person look approachable, with an open, welcoming face that you can clearly see? Or, is the image not what you expect; hides the person's face, or otherwise makes them seem aloof, reserved, edgy, or mysterious?

Check These Social Media Points

- Do you see Pictures and videos that illustrate immature or questionable

behavior?

- Are there Wall posts signifying prejudice, intolerance and hate?
- Do the 'Likes' selected by the candidate support organizations, web sites, or individuals that post or promote prejudice, intolerance, and hate?
- Does the person rant about their boss, their job, and/or their employer?
- Generally, do the candidate's expressed values, ethics, and morals reflect those of your company?

Chapter III

Candidate Profiles, Positive and Negative

These are some general candidate types that you can identify; bearing in mind that everyone is an individual, with unique employment histories. This is not a complete representation, just some generic candidate types that are easily recognized, as they share identifiable, common tendencies.

Positive Candidate Profiles

The Achiever shows a consistent and upward progression of accomplishments, starting from their academic days, all the way up to, and including the present; is always looking to stretch their abilities.

The Veteran is the subject-matter expert and go-to person in the department, who has a track record of patient mentoring of more junior staff through their career; may not have the most current industry credentials, but has the practical experience.

The Loyalist speaks in respectful and supportive terms about past and present employers, and accentuates the positive qualities of past employers, managers and co-workers; shows the tendency to stay with a company for many years.

The Team Player always speaks in terms of ‘we’ vs. ‘I’ and freely gives

credit to fellow team members; discusses the accomplishment of objectives, and their own contributions within the context of teamwork. Frequently enthusiastic, and is able to willingly subordinate their ego in order to achieve the group's objectives.

The Pioneer is fearless in starting new ventures, opening new offices, and going into uncharted territory in creating and presenting new services, information and goals; usually has high ego strength, and the ability to work alone and persevere in the face of obstacles.

The Mentor gives of their time to subordinates and excels in teaching, leading, assessing, and motivating others to achieve their highest potential; usually enjoys a good industry reputation and is well respected in their field.

The Leader is the person that all the staff turns to, seeking guidance, input and ideas to solve problems, create solutions, and set standards based on strong business ethics; has the ability to enthuse and motivate other people to achieve corporate objectives.

The Workhorse accepts increased workloads without complaint, and perseveres in the face of obstacles and the time needed to overcome them; sometimes under appreciated, and often underpaid.

Negative Candidate Profiles

The Poseur talks the talk, but rarely walks the walk in their career. Usually very up on the latest industry jargon, able to switch hats rapidly in a conversation; gives the impression of being more knowledgeable, experienced, and educated than they actually are.

The Challenger will take more of an aggressive tone in an interview setting; questioning the questioner, trying to control the flow of the discussion and bringing up arguments, subtly or sharply, depending on the experience of the interviewer, and what the candidate thinks of the interviewer's power to influence the decision.

The Hunter is always looking for the next best thing; striving to find the perfect position to justify making a move. Often, this proves to be an elusive goal, and time can be wasted courting this candidate who isn't really ready to move for anything but the ideal job.

The Tap Dancer gives you the impression of seeking to assure you that being fired or disciplined, or staying for very short periods of time in various jobs happened due to reasons completely beyond their control. Self-justification, evasive answers, placing blame on others, and avoiding personal responsibility are some of their traits.

The Politician wants to tell you exactly what you want to hear. Verbal backslapping, winking, jovial posturing, a friend to everyone; very easy to like, and you will enjoy the pleasant jokes and self-deprecating humor. However, when you dig a little deeper, you may find that there isn't a real track record of tangible achievements.

The Deceiver is one of the hardest to identify. Sociopathic tendencies exist to lie without remorse, fabricate their resumes, accomplishments, and even whole careers. They will literally stop at nothing to get what they want, and they use people as pawns in their game playing and intrigues.

The Controller is seeking power and control, and that includes domination of each interview. They want to project a powerful image, and will sometimes browbeat less experienced interviewers. They want to monopolize the conversation to impress the interviewer with their presence, command, and leadership qualities.

The Gold Digger has the highest drive to gaining more compensation in the shortest possible time. They will tend to have frequent job changes, and corresponding jumps in title responsibility. Ambitious and impatient, they will often be involved in counter offer scenarios because it is all about money, and looking at what is greener on the other side of the fence.

The Complainer is easy to identify because they are always saying something derogatory about their ex-employer, boss, or co-workers. They

are quick to find fault with everyone around them, and avoid taking mature responsibility for their own mistakes and decision-making. Cynical, dismissive, and pessimistic, their attitude can be summarized as: it wasn't my fault.

Chapter IV

Telephone and Personal Interviews

The Telephone or Virtual Interview

A telephone interview is an ideal tool to preselect candidates for a shortlist. It gives you the opportunity to hear a candidate speaking as they would to your customers, over the telephone. How a candidate answers questions about sensitive subjects, and how well they think on their feet, are easily determined in a telephone interview.

Have the resume in front of you, and review those points that require clarification. Before calling, circle the items that you want to focus on, or would like more information about. Aside from the ability to communicate clearly, listen to the tone and the attitude that the candidate projects.

Do they welcome your questions? Do they sound hesitant or self-assured? Are they frank or evasive in their answers? Use open-ended questions (beginning with 'how, what, who, where, when and why'), and also: describe or explain; these encourage a flow of information from the candidate.

Open-ended questions cannot be answered by a simple 'yes' or 'no'; they require a more detailed response. Use yes or no type questions to confirm specific facts about graduating, being fired, and so on. Use open-ended questions to draw out information from a candidate, to explore issues in depth, and to generate a flow in the discussion. Open-ended questions eliminate the awkward pauses that occur when you ask a yes or no question.

Have a number of these questions written out beforehand; this will allow you

to refer to those key points that you want to discuss. This also allows you to concentrate on the answers you receive, rather than have to think up new questions, and potentially miss vital clues in a candidate's responses that support or eliminate the candidate's further consideration. Offhand remarks or slips of the tongue that a candidate makes can be very revealing. If you are focused on what question to ask next, you may miss these signs and warning signals.

Begin the call by explaining to the candidate that you are calling to learn more about them. Give an estimate of approximately how long the call will be. Explain to them that they will have an opportunity to ask questions once you have covered what you need to. This will give you a measure of control over the call, and establish the ground rules.

12 Key Questions To Ask In A Telephone Interview

- Why are you applying to the position?
- Why are you available for employment (unemployed)?
- Why do you want to leave your present employer (if employed)?
- What experience do you you have for the position we are posting?
- What is the most recent industry training you have taken?
- What is the toughest part of your present job?
- What are you looking for in making a move?
- Why did you leave XYZ employer?
- Who did you report to directly there, and how can I contact them for a reference?
- Why should we hire you?
- How soon can you start?
- What salary range do you want?

Specific Questions For Specific Topics

Reasons For Applying

- Why are you looking at this time?

- What are the prospects for advancement where you are now?
- How did you come to leave XYZ company?
- How many other employees were released at the same time as you were?
- How long have you been looking?
- What do you want to achieve in making a move?

You want to determine at the beginning how motivated the person is, and how committed they are to making a change. You also want to know how long they have been looking, if they are currently employed, and the reasons why they are dissatisfied with their present employment. If the person is actively looking for work, establish why they were laid off or terminated. Do they have genuine interest in your job, or are they only looking to secure any job?

What do you know about our company?

The better candidates will research the company that they are applying to. They will have a general understanding of what the company does, and what markets the company is involved in. If they have done their homework, they will be aware of new products or business initiatives. A candidate, who has no clue about what you do, how you do it, and is oblivious about your customers or your markets, shows little interest in your firm.

Education, Training and Courses

- What year did you graduate from XYZ College?
- What is the most recent industry-specific training that you've taken?
- Why did you not complete your degree?
- Tell me more about this course, how has it helped you?

Have the candidate commit, yes or no, that they did graduate, or did achieve the diploma or degree in question noted on the resume. If they did not graduate or complete the academic program, what were the reasons? Were there specific circumstances that prevented them from doing so? Are they committed enough to see a challenge through?

Present Job Duties and Responsibilities

- Describe to me an average workday.
- What kinds of problems are you called upon to solve?
- How much involvement do you have with internal and external customers?
- What is the most challenging part of your job duties?
- How do you plan and organize your day?
- What methods do you use to keep track of information and details?
- How often do you meet with your superior to decide priorities and objectives?
- How much decision-making authority do you have?

How organized are they in their thinking, and how well can they describe to you what they do on a daily basis? Determine what degree of authority in decision-making they have, and when they need to escalate decisions to a higher level for resolution.

Customer involvement, and the degree to which they interact with internal and external customers, gives you an indication of their value to the organization. If they are handling a high volume of information and details, they will need to be well organized, and keep track of data coming at them from all directions.

Challenges at work are stimulating for some people; others consider challenges in a negative light. What is their attitude towards the most challenging aspects of their work?

Organizing information, keeping track of it, and recording vital details are essential skills to have in a job that requires thinking and planning. Managing streams of data, and keeping on top of developments with customers and suppliers makes the difference between happy and unhappy customers.

How much involvement do they have with their superiors to decide priorities and objectives? This often indicates how important they are on the team, and

how valued their input is. Decision-making authority involves trust; the company and their direct superior must have faith in their ability to use their personal judgment, and apply developed, critical thinking skills.

Career Progress and Advancement Prospects

- What does the future hold for you with XYZ Company?
- When were you promoted to your current position?
- Why do you think you were passed over for that promotion?
- What do you think is the next logical step in your career?
- How long have you been in this position for?

Is their advancement blocked where they are because there is someone in the position ahead of them who is not likely to move anytime soon? How long did it take them to be promoted to their current position? Determine if the candidate is on a faster track, or if they were promoted due to seniority instead of actual merit.

What attitudes do they hold towards the company if they were passed over for a recent promotion? Are they philosophical about that, or is there an edge of bitterness about being denied a promotion?

Taking the next step in your career requires a realistic appreciation of your skills, knowledge, experience, and abilities. Impatience to get ahead, and thinking you are more ready to assume greater responsibility than you actually are, leads people to make errors in judgment, and career moves based on ambition, instead of a realistic self-assessment and self-knowledge.

Reasons For Leaving Past Employers

- Did you leave on your own, or were you asked to leave?
- Who made the decision to let you go and why?
- How much notice did you receive that you were going to be laid off?
- What sort of employment reference could we expect to receive from XYZ Company?
- Why do you think it didn't work out at XYZ Company?

- How did they tell you that you were being terminated?

Candidates will sometimes talk about a mutual decision to part ways with an employer. You need to establish how mutual that decision was.

Are they saying this because they don't want to admit that they were fired, or did the company reluctantly make the decision to release them, due to changing corporate objectives? Did the candidate receive advanced warning of an impending layoff? This may indicate whether this move was planned and communicated to the candidate, or happened suddenly, and without any forewarning. This can also indicate if there was a case being made against the candidate, due to poor work performance or attitude problems, over a period of time.

If the candidate is willing, and readily agrees to provide an employment reference from their most recent past employer, this suggests that there was a friendly departure from the company. If they start to redirect the conversation into another area, ask them why they think they won't get a good reference, and see what the answer is.

What are their attitudes toward leaving from the employer; what have they learned, and how have they grown in the process? More mature candidates will come to terms with these situations, and display an attitude of equanimity and acceptance. It isn't only what is said and what the candidate responses are; it is also a question of the candidate's tone and attitudes.

Listen for emotional and negative comments. What is their understanding and their perspective on what they have experienced?

The telephone interview allows you to clearly focus on what is being said to you. Without the visual distraction of the person in front of you, you can concentrate on listening to the candidate's tone, inflection, pauses, and how clearly the candidate communicates information, complex ideas, and concepts.

Does the candidate sound rehearsed, or do you get the impression that they

are thinking on their feet, spontaneously? Pay special attention to those sensitive areas of the reasons for leaving employers, and why they are looking, if employed. Is the candidate emotional when discussing these topics? Do they sound self-confident and settled when they are talking to you?

Salary and Benefits Expectations

- What was your last salary leaving from XYZ Company?
- What additional benefits did you have?
- What incentive or bonus did the company offer, and when was it paid?
- How often did you receive your salary and performance review?
- Why do you think they didn't review your salary last year?
- What salary level are you accustomed to earning?
- What salary range are you looking for in making a move?
- How does the salary range that we are offering compare to your current earnings?
- How important is salary to you in considering making a move?
- How often did you receive a salary increase over the last few years?

Salary, incentives, and benefits offered are key factors for most candidates. Some candidates are more motivated by money than others. Determine when and how much of a salary increase they received at their last review.

Salary increases and their frequency may provide a clue to their actual worth, to their employer. Are salary increases based on performance, seniority, or cost-of-living adjustments? How realistic are their salary expectations, and do they fall within the range that you are offering?

If the candidate has moved frequently in the last few years, ask them about the salary increases that they received in making those moves. Does this person jump from one job to the next, and expect to receive a higher salary each time they do so?

People who move very rapidly up the salary scale often expect to continue doing so if they join your company. These employees are more likely to

entertain counter offers in the future, if their needs are not met.

Give them the opportunity to ask a few questions

Good candidates will ask intelligent questions about the job, the responsibilities, the department, and their role in the company, and the company's growth plans. Candidates whose primary motivation is money will focus on salary, benefits, advancement potential, and may have very few questions about responsibilities, job challenges, and what role they will play in the department. Well-prepared and organized candidates ask good questions; marginal candidates will be hard pressed to come up with focused and relevant questions.

Closing the call

You can quickly assess how suitable the candidate is for further follow-up. The impression that you formed talking to the candidate over the telephone can then be confirmed, in a personal interview.

Retain control of the call by asking open-ended questions at the end of a candidate's response. Take note if the candidate tries to commandeer the discussion, and steer the candidate, politely but firmly, back to the points that you want to cover.

If you are interested in following up with the candidate, then invite them in for a personal discussion. If you are not interested in pursuing this candidate further, it is courteous to tell them so, diplomatically. If you are undecided, state that your purpose is to gather information, and that you will be back to them, one way, or another, when their status is clear.

Personal Interviews - What To Watch For

Does the candidate arrive a few minutes before the meeting, on time or late?

Better-organized candidates will make sure they have a few minutes to

compose themselves before a meeting. Arriving late is only excusable if the traffic is unexpectedly heavy, due to an unforeseen accident, and the blockage that this can create.

Does the candidate call if they expect to be late? Common courtesy suggests that calling ahead is respecting another's time. Better candidates will do this, if they see that they are likely to be delayed, through no fault of their own.

Is the candidate polite to the receptionist, or your assistant?

Candidates with good people skills acknowledge and interact easily with people, at all levels of seniority in a company. Check with reception, and ask if the candidate was friendly, approachable, and smiling.

How do they greet you?

The first thirty seconds to a minute of greeting a candidate tells you a lot about the person you are meeting.

- Do they initiate and maintain good eye contact with you, without trying to stare you down?
- Do they project a positive, neutral, defensive, or arrogant attitude?
- Do they seem at ease in their surroundings?
- Do they offer their hand first in shaking yours?
- What is the quality of their handshake; is it warm and firm, or limp and cold?
- Does their voice tone convey warmth and positive interest?

Good eye contact establishes a human connection. People who do not reciprocate eye contact may have a lack of confidence; arrogance, immaturity, or a lack of awareness as to how they are projecting their personality in meeting people are other reasons.

The initial attitude that they display within the first seconds of meeting you is a clear indication of how friendly, approachable, and positive they will likely be with your customers and their colleagues. A little nervousness is

natural for most people; timid or unconfident people will experience a stronger degree of agitation; this may express itself as fidgeting, and fiddling with pens, or other objects.

More extroverted people who like other people will tend to offer their hand in greeting, first. Some people can summon a warm tone in an initial greeting, and then in the course of an interview, the tone can change in attitude. Do they sustain this ability to project warmth throughout the entire discussion?

How well organized is the candidate?

Did they come with resume, copies of reference letters, or copies of diplomas and degrees that you requested? Do they take notes throughout the discussion? Have they a list of prepared questions that they refer to, when you ask them if they have questions? Organized and detailed people will take the time to ensure that they have everything that they need for an interview.

Who is doing most of the talking?

If you find yourself doing most of the talking, then you are receiving less information than you need from the candidate, to make an informed hiring decision. Some employers will monopolize the conversation, expanding at length about the company, the job, the future, and the prospects for growth.

If you do this before the candidate has provided evidence to support their candidacy for the position, you are making it a lot easier for the candidate to craft their answers; these will reflect what you have said is important about the job, and to the company.

You need to gather information from the candidate first, before broadcasting your expectations. They should be providing the majority of the information flow to you.

How do they answer questions?

- Do they stay on topic, or do they wander off onto other subjects?
- How complete are the answers you are receiving?
- Do their answers sound rehearsed and canned, or natural and spontaneous?
- How well do they think on their feet, when you ask an unexpected or unusual question?
- Do they try to redirect you away from uncomfortable or sensitive topics?
- What attitudes do you detect when they speak of past employers?
- How well equipped are they, and aware of the needs of the job?
- How realistic are their ambitions and personal expectations?

Self-involved candidates like to hear themselves talk--a lot. It is hard to get a word in edgewise, especially when they are telling you an extended anecdote. You have to pull them back constantly onto the topic under review.

Focused candidates provide focused and complete answers. Rehearsed answers sound either too smooth, or wooden and mechanical. Spontaneous answers tend to flow well, and they will sound more 'genuine'. Natural responses will have a natural rhythm to them, as people exchange a flow of information, back and forth.

The ability to handle unexpected questions, and think outside the box is the mark of a keen intelligence; able to be aware of changing events, and capable of thinking up solutions to problems, based on experience, confidence, and past successes. That ability to mentally switch gears is a vital skill for people who work with other people, and who solve problems, and devise innovative solutions.

Sensitive topics have emotions connected to them in the candidate's mind. Unresolved inner conflicts, negative feelings, and attitudes can shade their responses. Even inexperienced interviewers can pick up these signals. This brings up the question of the candidate's emotional maturity and self-control. Avoiding unpleasant topics indicates unresolved issues that the

candidate may or may not be choosing to work through.

How attuned are they to the demands of the position? How self-aware are they regarding the demands and expectations of the job? They may not have all of the skills and experience required for the job, but if they have the awareness of that fact, and they are taking concrete steps to improving their knowledge, skills, and abilities, then this is a positive point to consider.

Are they trying to bite off more than they can chew? A self-aware person is a person aware of their limitations, yet confident about their ability to succeed. Trying to take on too much at once can be a recipe for avoidable failure. Enthusiasm must be coupled with ability and the skills necessary, to make measureable progress.

Signs of Honesty and Dishonesty In A Personal Interview

What are some of the telltale signs of honesty and dishonesty that you can pick up from what the candidate is telling you and showing you in their presentation? There are both verbal and non-verbal clues that indicate a person's sincerity or lack of it in an interview.

Voice tone, gestures, eye movements, and physical signs of discomfort are communicated involuntarily when we are under stress. How a person moves and physically reacts to questions and statements can indicate fundamental attitudes, and provide feedback to consider when weighing the merits of one candidate versus another.

Interview Issues - Body Language

How a candidate carries him or herself in an interview setting gives you a preview of how they will interact with people every day. What are some of the signs that broadcast sincerity, dishonesty, interest, agreement, and disagreement?

Careful observations of body language signals, plus your intuition or inner

feeling about the person speaking to you are your best intangible tools, to assist you in the pre-selection process. Many people can sense when a person is being truthful or untruthful with them. Trust these inner signals and objectively gather your impressions.

Eye-contact:

The expression: 'shifty-eyed' has a basis in reality. It is an uncomfortable feeling when someone avoids your eyes. The person's eyes that are constantly darting around the room, and only briefly returning to you, may indicate that the person is being insincere. Locking eyes with you, in an unblinking stare can also indicate a lack of sincerity. This is also an intimidation tactic, to assert dominance and control.

Hand gestures:

What a person does with their hands can signal inner comfort or discomfort with what you are saying. Rubbing your nose, touching your mouth or other areas of your face, combined with crossing your arms in a defensive posture, can all indicate dishonesty. Do not pounce on one sign given in an interview to judge the individual as sincere or insincere. If however, you see a combination of signals, then you may have a clearer indication of the truthfulness of the person.

Other common body language signals that you can observe in an interviewing setting include:

Happiness or satisfaction: Smiling is the most common sign, along with enlarged pupils, a relaxed posture, serene facial expression, free and natural movement body movements. The sign of a genuine smile versus an artificial one is found in and at the corner of the eyes. If the smile does not touch the eyes, and the the corners of the eyes (where crows-feet develop) do not crinkle, the smile may not be genuine.

Unhappiness or dissatisfaction: A frowning face, constricted pupils, displaying a tense posture, pursed lips, a furrowed brow, flared nostrils, a

rigid posture, plus a lack of body movement, or nervous, jerky movements can all signal agitation. Clenching of the fist, tightly grabbing the upper part of the leg, flipping pages abruptly, looking speculatively at the interviewer in a supercilious manner over the top of one's eyeglasses, tapping the feet, and bouncing the leg up and down.

Agreement: Nodding along with the interviewer's discourse, winking, smiling, suddenly relaxing following a period of focused concentration, holding serene eye contact, leaning towards the speaker.

Disagreement: Shaking the head from side-to-side, frowning, crossing the arms, crossing the legs, pursing the lips, drumming the fingers, tapping a pen or pencil, leaning back away from the speaker, rolling the eyes, shifting the sitting position obliquley away from the inteviewer.

Interest or Receptivity: Serene eye contact, stillness of body, even breathing, arms folded loosely over lower body, leaning forward, nodding slightly,

Disinterest or Distraction: Looking away, hunched shoulders, arms folded on chest, face placid, vacant eyes, sighing, finger drumming, or desk tapping.

Anger or Irritation: rapid, pronounced breathing, intense and aggressive eye contact, arms folded on chest, facial expression tight, clenched fists, hands gripping the desktop.

Disbelief: One raised eyebrow, crooked smile, and head shaking side to side, tilted head, speculatively observing the speaker.

Surprise: Two raised eyebrows, enlarged pupils, sudden attention directed to the speaker

Decision-making in progress: Eyes directed to the ceiling, blinking rapidly, turning away, and gazing into the middle distance, picking up and handling the interviewer's business card, standing and walking back and forth.

Decision has been made: Deep breathing, followed by a sigh and relaxation, end of facial tension, followed by smiling, or sustained eye contact.

Interview Issues - Objectivity and Subjectivity (The Halo Effect)

The halo effect is a state of mind that you arrive to when you believe that you have the ideal candidate in front of you who can do no wrong. This perception can blind you to other factors that then escape your awareness because you are essentially 'in love' with this candidate.

It is the interviewing form of love at first sight, in a work setting. You feel this way because the candidate seems to have everything you are looking for. Also, you have established a great rapport with the candidate, and the candidate is convinced of his or her own merits for the job.

When the capacity to remain neutral and gather information to make an informed hiring decision is affected, the halo effect casts its warm, golden glow, and you start thinking about getting this person on board, as soon as possible.

Slow down; take stock, and consult with your superiors and colleagues. Do they have the same impressions as you? Are they interjecting notes of caution, and counseling you to pace yourself, and take discussions one step at a time? Heed their advice and step back; observe your own reactions to this candidate. Is your enthusiasm shared and justified, and most important, is the candidate truly qualified in every particular for the job?

Some people interview very well. They also have the best of intentions sitting down in front of you. Their personal likability makes it easy to overlook missing ingredients. These include experience, qualifications, proven abilities, and aptitudes that are deemed essential for successful job performance. Before you start drawing up an offer for this candidate, take a day or two to allow the initial glow to wear off.

What is their total fitness for the job; do they meet the hiring criteria set out, and do they have the experience, skills, and qualifications necessary to succeed? If the answer is a resounding yes, and they check off in all of the important categories, then you have a great candidate. Decide carefully, which hiring criteria you are prepared to compromise on. Consult the employment references and background check information. What do these tell you?

If you find that you are trying to convince yourself, or other people involved in the decision-making, and despite the candidate's missing qualifications, skills, or experience, that they are the one to hire, then consider that the halo effect may still be operating. Make a list of positives and negatives associated with hiring this candidate. Review the essential qualifications and experience required.

Sit down with your superior, discuss each point, and ask for your superior's objective opinion. If necessary, have your superior meet the candidate also. When you slow down the hiring process in this way, you can avoid making impulsive decisions about the candidate's suitability for the position, and offering the job prematurely to someone who may, or may not be, the right person to hire.

Chapter V

Negotiations, Offers and Counter Offers

Candidate Attitudes in Negotiations

Negotiations are a time of heightened tension. What attitudes are you seeing from the candidate? Do you see cooperation and a willingness to be flexible, or do you see a person with a fixed point of view, taking an aggressive approach? The attitudes that the candidate displays, and the general approach that they use at this important time, previews how they will negotiate terms and services with your customers.

Do they understand how to give and take, and create mutually advantageous solutions, or is their attitude rigid and unyielding? The best agreements unfold in an atmosphere of mutual goodwill, harmony, and the desire to come to mutual terms. Positions are put forward; counter-proposals are made, and the natural, organic process of people agreeing to specific terms happens, in an unforced and agreeable atmosphere.

Warning Signs That a Candidate Isn't Committed

You gave the offer to the candidate, and they seem interested, but you haven't heard back for a couple of days; what is happening? There are many reasons that candidates suddenly get cold feet, or change their minds in the middle or the end of the hiring process.

One reason is simply that they found a better job, and haven’t bothered to call you back to decline the offer. If they are wrestling with various options available to them, including your offer, they have yet to decide which offer to accept. One way to avoid this uncertainty is to put a specific date to respond by in the offer itself. You create a time frame for decision-making. An open-ended offer with no date is a problem because there is no deadline that the candidate needs to respect. Give them a specific date to sign the offer by.

A sign that the candidate is wrestling with another option, or is considering taking another offer, is the lack of return phone calls. Are they requesting more time to decide by, or indicating that other priorities have come up that they have to attend to first? These types of responses can indicate the desire to have more time to make a decision.

Counter Offers

Certain people are perpetual hunters in the employment game as well. These people receive ego stroking through getting employment offers once in a while. Then, they subject their present employer to the pressure scenario that involves a counter offer. These counter offers are inducements made by the

employer to have the employee stay when they have resigned, or signaled an intention to resign.

The candidate goes back to the employer with your offer, and gets the employer to match or improve it. Some candidates play this power game; until they see that the employer doesn't want to play any longer, and then suddenly agree to accept your offer. Be careful with this type of candidate because they are inclined to play power games when they are working with you too, in their department, with their superiors, and their subordinates.

Counter offers are made by companies in order to solve an immediate problem. A manager faced with the imminent loss of a valued employee has to address the situation quickly. Promises are made; promotions are recommended, and salary levels are quickly reviewed. It is easier to throw money at the problem rather than have to hire a new person, with the added investment of time, effort, and risk involved.

The emotional involvement and investment that an employee has made in their current employer becomes a factor in the candidate's decision-making. It can be difficult to leave friendships developed and accomplishments behind. Moving forward involves a degree of perceived loss and risk. The fear of change, and the reluctance to leave behind familiar ways and faces, may influence their thinking.

Sometimes, the employer pushes very hard to convince the employee to stay. Some candidates reject the pressure, and stay focused on their decision to leave. Other candidates succumb to the ego stroking or pressure put on them to stay, obtaining a higher salary or promotion as the reward.

You won't always know what is happening behind the scenes in situations like this. Instead, you may receive a call, and the candidate will apologize, saying that they have changed their mind about accepting your offer. Other times, you will not receive any calls at all, and the situation will just fade away from lack of action, or follow through.

It is likely that a counter offer is happening when the candidate goes back to

you, more than once, to change the salary, other items in the offer, or to ask about other perks. Repeated delays and procrastination confirms this. Impress upon the candidate when you give them the offer, that they should only accept the offer, if they are committed to joining you.

Confirm all the terms on paper, and have the candidate sign the acceptance, as soon as possible.

Power Issues and Manipulation of the Candidate By External Sources

You are negotiating with the candidate, and the attitude is changing from cooperation to a more challenging tone. What has changed? Many people influence a person's decision to accept, or not accept, an employment offer.

First, there is the spouse or partner of the candidate. Husbands and partners often give their opinion on the suitability of an employment offer. In certain cultures, spouses have to obtain permission to accept an offer. Other family members offer their opinions as well.

Next, you have coworkers or industry associates, offering their points of view of an employment offer. This can range from a casual discussion in a bar, to an earnest conversation with an industry mentor about the merits of the offer, and whether the candidate should accept it.

Finally, you have the candidate’s current superior offering their opinion, under pressure, if the candidate has hinted or directly stated that they are seeking greener pastures. Comparisons may be made between the overall packages, if the candidate has chosen to share these details of the offer.

With different opinions being received, the candidate becomes confused, and uncertain what to do next. They feel obligated to please a spouse, and obtain what the spouse wants to see in the offer. This is very common.

Money, family time and vacation time are very important issues that are

brought forward. Spouses and partners may disagree with the terms of the offer, and say this to the candidate, suggesting that they go back, and change the agreement. Now that there is external pressure on the candidate, they become more defensive in stating their position, and seeking what they or others want.

To determine whether the candidate is receiving external pressure from other people, ask them this question, or a variation of it:

Who knows about your offer? Another version: **Whom have you discussed the offer with?**

This gives you an indication whether the pressure is coming from family members, or other sources, like direct superiors, industry associates, or mentors.

If the source of confusion is the direct superior, then you have one of three scenarios:

- The candidate is inexperienced, and sees no reason to keep the offer's details confidential.
- The candidate has what they believe is an excellent relationship with their boss, and considers them more of a friend than a boss.
- The candidate is putting pressure on their boss; telling them about the offer, to prove their worth, in preparation to accepting a counter offer to stay.

This is where you explain to the candidate that it is normal for their boss to want them to stay. They do not want to have to replace you; this costs both time and money, to find your replacement. You point out that they have decided to move on, and that their decision to leave should be respected by their superior. Remind them that following through on decisions and promises made is what a person of integrity does.

Employment Offer Contents

- The title of the position
- The starting salary
- The salary review date
- Bonus or other incentive details
- Overtime or after-hours/on-call pay
- The projected start date
- Paid Vacation time
- Benefits coverage for the employee and the employees family
- A separate confidentiality agreement
- The benefits insurance booklet, if applicable
- A specific date to sign the acceptance by

Make sure that there is a clause in the employment offer dealing with misrepresentation, and its consequences. This protects your interests in the future to some extent, if you have to let the employee go, due to them falsifying employment information in the original application.

The Offer should be on company letterhead; although email offers are becoming more common, incorporating the points noted above. Your superior, and the Human Resources department, should be copied on all message strings associated with the hiring of this candidate.

This is a time when the offer's details attain a magnified importance. Ensure that the offer contains exactly the terms discussed before you send it. If you have given this to a third party to prepare, this last step is even more important, to maintain accuracy and completeness of the information.

Monitor the candidate's resignation to ensure that the employee starts with you.

Instruct the employment firm to monitor the resignation carefully; don't assume that this will be done automatically. Some recruiters will assume that everything will happen as it is supposed to. The fact is, counter offers are often held back until the last few days before a candidate is scheduled to start with you.

During the bulk of a standard two-week notice period, more time and attention is paid to cleaning up files, tying up loose ends, and bringing their work up to date. Once that step is complete, employers will sometimes reconsider their acceptance of the candidate's resignation. These last minute offers can come as a major surprise to candidates, who thought that the way was clear for them to leave the company, with the goodwill of their ex-employer.

The employer who makes a last minute counter offer often succeeds; the reason is that this is unexpected, and catches the employee off-guard, causing the employee to second-guess their decision, and to get cold feet. This can be a conscious tactic on the part of the employer, or a spontaneous act to keep a good person on the team. Maintain close contact all the way through, either personally, or through your third party recruiter, to ensure that there are no last minute surprises.

Chapter VI

Is The Candidate A Potential Leader?

Have they received a logical series of promotions that illustrate a progressive forward movement in their careers?

Have they shown initiative in taking on large and complex projects that demand an uncommon degree of commitment, energy and dedication to achieving a goal?

Have they developed a degree of self-discipline, and the proven ability to persevere in the step-by-step tasks required to reach an objective - despite setbacks, uncertainty, and disappointments?

Can they prioritize and organize work projects so that their progress is achieved in measurable ways, with clear guidelines and clear results?

Have they been successful in presenting ideas, having senior management

approve them, and then implemented them to the benefit of the company's profits or reduction of costs, or improved productivity?

Have they devised training manuals, or been able to clarify confusing information for their peers or superiors, and had these improvements adopted within the company?

Have they turned disgruntled customers into satisfied customers, through going well beyond the call of duty, thinking outside the box?

Have they been successful in up-selling products or services, to increase revenues or create new customers, and have they been recognized for these achievements?

Are they adept at creating strong working relationships with decision-makers in and outside their firm, and developed mutual trust and confidence with them?

Have they developed a network of useful contacts and sources of assistance that they can draw from, to help solve problems and expedite solutions?

Are they the person considered to be the resident expert on a particular topic, and do people gravitate to them for guidance in solving work-related problems?

Have people sought them out specifically, to obtain guidance in conflict-resolution situations that demand objectivity, empathy, and rational thinking, thereby defusing emotionally tense events?

Do they enjoy teaching others, and sharing personal knowledge, to help others become successful?

Have they been effective in training junior people, and able to have them catch on quickly, to learn new information and procedures?

Have these trained people then moved on to higher levels of responsibility in their own work?

Do their superiors seek out their opinions or advice when considering options, and tackling important issues or problems?

Are they constantly thinking in terms of how to do things better; taking time after hours to work on plans, in addition to juggling multiple priorities?

Do they accept having to put in extra hours, to ensure that projects are completed on time?

Are they taking career-oriented courses, and seeing themselves in a position of leadership in the future, and are they working to make that vision a reality?

Are they effective at creating written reports, using various forms of media, and have they received positive feedback from superiors on the quality and clarity of their information?

Can they handle the stresses and uncertainties of business life while maintaining equanimity, self-motivation, and an unswerving direction towards the attainment of goals and objectives?

Can they objectively critique their performance, conduct, successes, and failures, and learn from those situations?

All of these qualities, skills and attributes are evidence of potential or actual leadership abilities. To gain the trust of those below and above them in responsibility is one of the marks of a leader.

Chapter VII

Recruiters, Personality Assessment Tests

Recruiters - What To Look For

Recruiters come in many categories -- specialists and generalists, retainer and contingency. They all share one thing in common: employers engage their services to hire people for specific positions. There are limits to what a recruiter can do for you. So, how do you determine which ones are more likely to be a useful contact for you?

How do you recognize the ones who will fairly and professionally represent you to their clients? Use these benchmarks to evaluate them by: honesty, integrity, longevity, discretion, attitude, commitment, and awareness.

Honesty and integrity are the first considerations. You want someone who is going to be truthful with you. How do they source candidates, and what steps do they take to pre-select candidates for consideration? If all they do is send resumes, without first seeing the candidate to assess their strengths and weaknesses, you need to know this.

Longevity means a recruiter has remained in business because employers and candidates have been willing to place trust in them, over a period of years. Do industry associations active within their area of specialization know these recruiters? Ask friends and coworkers what their reputation is. How long have they been in operation?

Discretion is vital. Establish how they work, and set the ground rules for them representing you. What is their understanding of non-disclosure agreements and other confidential approaches, to minimize the risks for their clients?

Attitude and commitment are important. Determine if your interests and needs are being taken into account. Be wary of the aggressive recruiter who tries to steamroll you into looking at or accepting a candidate, trying to convince you that they know what you need. Some people allow themselves to be bullied into accepting their referrals because they feel that the recruiter must be the expert.

Accepting referrals under duress rarely makes for sound decision-making. Don't be rushed into making a commitment that doesn't sit well with

you. Trust your intuition. If it feels wrong, it probably is. How committed are they to the people they represent? What resources do they offer in their literature or website to help people in need of guidance with resumes, cover letters and other issues? Do you get the feeling that they are genuinely trying to help you, or is self-promotion the major theme of their communications?

Awareness of trends in specific compensation or other changes affecting your industry means they have their ear to the ground. How much do they know about salary scales in your industry? How familiar are they with your industry's terminology and terms of reference?

An informed recruiter can be a good contact to have, and a valuable resource for candidates and information.

Personality Assessment Tools

There are numerous psychological assessment tools available from various organizations, and a number of well-recognized ones available online, both free and at reasonable cost for the paid versions. These are two of the best that we have seen in operation are:

Myers-Briggs Type Indicator
One of the most widely recognized is MBTI; in use for over sixty-five years, The MBTI or Myers-Briggs Type Indicator has been improved by ongoing research and development.

DiSC Profile System
DiSC is a personal assessment tool to create self-awareness. DiSC is not a test that can be passed or failed, and it helps people understand their behavioral differences, leading to greater harmony in the workplace.

Keeping Good People

The competition for experienced, qualified, and well connected people is intense. How do you improve the odds of keeping good people and why do

they leave? Employer time and money is invested in the training of staff, the development of managers, and the improvement of sales staff skills.

One of the major frustrations of any hiring manager is finding that a good employee is leaving for greener pastures. There are ways to stop the exodus of good people from your organization. We often see the results of broken relationships, misplaced trust, and the realization that conditions aren't going to improve. The areas of concern to the majority of employees fall into one of four main categories:

- Recognition
- Challenge
- Relationships
- Compensation/Rewards

Recognition is the human need for acknowledgement and approval. It is also one of the intangible reasons why people choose to move on in their careers. The lack of recognition from superiors for a job well done is one of the most avoidable reasons to lose a good employee. The desire to contribute and to create value is a basic human motivation at any level of responsibility. To feel that your efforts are recognized and appreciated strengthens the bond of loyalty to the employer.

Simple expressions of respect or verbal approval will be enough for some staff members, to continue making efforts for the employer's benefit. Other people require more tangible expressions of the employer's recognition of their efforts. Regular performance reviews are an inexpensive opportunity to provide that recognition. When people feel as though their contribution is meaningless or being taken for granted, they begin to consider their options. People want to think that their work makes a difference. A simple gesture such as taking staff out for a friendly lunch occasionally, or having coffee to acknowledge a person's contribution, can do much to build trust and loyalty.

Challenge is a powerful motivator to stay or to go. Employees who find their

jobs becoming routine tend to lose interest in their work. The desire to learn and grow, to push into uncharted waters, and be excited about one's work again is a positive force for an employer to harness.
When people feel that they have reached the limits of career growth, and there is no more challenge where they are, it is natural to seek change, and the excitement of new experiences.

The most successful companies identify the potential of their people, and develop that potential, to achieve corporate goals. Employers often leave good people in static positions because they have shown themselves to be effective in those roles. Meanwhile, other talents and skills may be untapped, and these people seek to stretch themselves and their abilities, to see what they can handle.

Relationships, plus a sense of shared vision and commitment, are the glue that keeps a team pulling in the same direction. The best managers are inclusive, and create a stimulating and positive working environment. Office politics, disrespect, favoritism, and the unequal sharing of the workload have a negative effect on the relationships between a manager, and their employees.

When staff members are promoted into positions of authority, and are not given adequate training in management and communications skills, interpersonal problems can develop that affect department unity. The result can be the departure of people who once were productive and happy peers of the person promoted. Internal mentors are a powerful resource for developing people, for the company's future growth.

Compensation provides a benchmark by which the value of work is measured. Employers often maintain salaries lower than industry averages; this allows more flexibility when the need to negotiate arises. Some employees will compromise for a time, and accept negative conditions, in exchange for greater compensation. Eventually, most people need to feel that they are being treated fairly, and that they are not being taken advantage of. There are options that an employer can offer aside from money, such as

time off, which to some employees is more important than salary.

In order to keep good people, it is important to recognize their work; provide ongoing challenges to grow by; build strong relationships founded on trust and mutual respect, and compensate them fairly. The employers who operate on those principles will, in the long run, have happier employees, a talent pool for future growth, and more satisfied customers.

Appendix

Reference Questions, and Questions for Management and Sales positions

Reference Checking Questions

Work Performance:

In what capacity have you known _____?
How honest is _____?
How reliable is _____?
How dependable is _____?
How cooperative is _____?
How long was he/she reporting to you?
How did you find his/her work performance?
What was his/her best contribution to the company?
What were his/her key responsibilities?
How did his/her performance compare with peers?
How effective is he/she at customer development/retention?
What are his/her strengths as an employee?
How did customers view his/her work performance?
What degree of personal supervision does he/she require?
How proactive or reactive is he/she in a crisis situation?
How much support does he/she require on a daily basis?
How well does he/she take constructive suggestions?

How well organized is _____?
How would you describe his/her problem-solving abilities?
What did/do co-workers think of him/her?
How effective is he/she in communicating with superiors?

How responsive is he/she in following up specific tasks?
Where did he/she exceed your expectations of performance?
What areas of his/her performance fell short of expectations?
How quickly does he/she learn new concepts and procedures?
What sort of personality does he/she have in the workplace?
What sort of initiative did he/she show when unsupervised?
What sort of people does he/she interact well with?
What sort of people does he/she clash with?
What steps did he/she take to improve questionable performance?
How would you describe his/her way of handling people?
How knowledgeable is he/she about his/her job functions?
How flexible and adaptable is he/she to change?
What were the attitudes he/she showed towards co-workers?
How would you feel about rehiring him/her if it were possible?

Questions For Management Candidates

Who reports to you directly and indirectly?
How involved are you in hiring/firing/training?
What are your administrative responsibilities?
What areas are you directly accountable for?
How involved are you in short/long-range business planning?
How much of you time is spent in revenue-creation activities?
What are the contributions you've made to your department?
Describe the most difficult aspects of your duties.
What strengths/weaknesses were noted on your last evaluation?
What are the duties of the people you manage?
How would you describe your management style?
What other departments do you deal with daily?
What are the limits of your decision-making authority?

What kind of reports do you prepare and how often?
How do you organize and schedule your subordinates?
Tell me about a recent crisis which you handled.
How do you go about orienting new employees?
What sort of tasks do you delegate to others?
What type of people do you interact well with?
How do you organize and coordinate staff meetings?
What sort of employee discipline guidelines do you follow?
What do you do when a staff member resists following policy?
How do you react to poor performance by staff?
How do you take direction and criticism?
Who was the best manager you ever had and why?
What is the difference between supervision and management?
How do you handle change?
How do you make important decisions?
What do you look for in people you hire?
How do you deal with the pressures of your responsibilities?
How do you feel you could improve as a manager/leader?
What does leadership mean to you?

Questions To Ask Sales Candidates

How did you learn to sell?
What is your sales quota and how is it established?
How much time do you spend developing new business?
How do you target new accounts for prospecting?
How do you acquire new sales leads?
Who are your major competitors and why?
What business trends do you see developing in the market?
What makes a successful sales person?
How do you define a new customer's needs and expectations?
What kind of problems do you have to solve as a salesperson?
How do you get a reading of people upon first meeting them?
How do you approach understanding your customer's needs?
How do you establish rapport with a stranger on the telephone?

Explain your role as a team member of a sales force.
How do you deal with disagreements with others?
How do you organize yourself for daily activities?
What kind of people do you like to sell to?
How do you turn a buyer into a regular customer?
Why do people buy a product or service?
What do you consider the most crucial part of your job?
What kinds of rewards are most satisfying to you?
Describe the best and worst manager you've ever had.
How do you deal with angry and upset customers?
How much time do you spend on the different parts of your job?
What have you learned from the different sales jobs you've had?
How would you break in a new territory for an employer?
How many accounts do you like to handle at one time?
When do you find silence to be useful in selling?
What are the skills needed to be successful on the telephone?
How detailed are the sales reports you prepare?
What do you feel are your personal limitations?
How do you get people to work in cooperation with you?

Questions Candidates Ask Employers

An interview isn't supposed to be a one-way street, where only the employer can ask questions. Most candidates need to ask a few of their own, to determine how suitable this opportunity is. These are some that you can expect to receive.

- **Why are you looking?**

The first thing to determine is how stable this position is, and what prospects for advancement there are for the candidate in the future. Is this a static position that has little opportunity for growth, or is it a position that offers the ability to interact with other departments, learn new skills, and be challenged?

- **What happened to the person who was in this position?**

This is a general question to find out why the person left, and what the attitudes are to the incumbent. It will also provide information on where the person has moved on within the company. This lets a candidate know what the promotional possibilities may be in the future.

- **How long have you been looking?**

Are you in a panic, or are you taking a more measured approach to this hiring? Also, if you have been looking for a long time, maybe their negotiating position will be strengthened if they have the skills that you need.

- **How has the position become available?**

Did the incumbent quit suddenly, was there a promotion internally, or are you unhappy with the person that you have, presently? Candidates are wary of positions that seem to have a revolving door, and that frequently are advertised for on major job boards. It gives the impression of instability.

- **How often do you look to fill this job?**

This informs them whether it is a position that has a high turnover, a position that is vacant only rarely, or if it has been newly created. This question may also be suggested by the recruiter to the candidate, to ask the employer, to determine the frequency of openings that they can represent.

- **What are you looking for in the person you hire?**

After they establish why you are looking, they need to understand what you are looking for. Not every position has a growth curve. Do they have what you require, and will they be happy with the scope of the responsibilities, in the long run? Candidates with defined expectations ask this question to see if the company's business ethics and philosophy are in line with their own.

- **What is the most challenging part of this job?**

This gives them a sense of whether the interviewer understands the demands of the job, and the expectations placed on the successful candidate. This question cuts to the heart of the importance of the job, and what attributes, skills and experience are required to fulfill the job's role in the department.

- **What role will I play in the department?**

This will indicate how important their job is in the organizational scheme of things. It gives them a sense of the level of responsibility involved, and how visible the position is for future promotions. People who like to be involved with other departments, working in a cooperative and very team oriented environment, choose jobs which allow them to stretch their capabilities.

- **What kind of person has been successful in this job (formerly)?**

Different jobs demand different levels of aggression, patience, interpersonal skills, ability to work with or without support, and the ability to withstand pressure and stress. This question is asked to make sure that the demands of the job reflect their basic style and personal orientation. A high degree of self-awareness enables a candidate to judge if the position is suitable to their temperament and interpersonal skills.

- **How will you measure my performance?**

It is important that they know what the expectations of performance are, and what factors you will review to assess your progress. Are the standards and benchmarks established realistic and achievable? People may be attracted by the higher income and greater responsibilities of a career move, only to find out in the fullness of time that the employer expectations are unrealistic, or unattainable.

- **What does the future hold?**

If they are to assume the risk of making a career move, they want to ensure

that there are prospects for long-term job satisfaction. Where will they progress to in the company? The best promotional opportunities occur in positions of higher risk. What can you offer you in the way of growth, and in what general time frame?

- **Where will I go within the company later?**

This will tell them what they can expect. If there is a clear path of succession mapped out within the department, then they are more likely to be happier in the long-term. If this position is a good entry point into the firm, they may have more options for growth in different departments.

These are a few of the questions asked by better candidates when assessing the suitability of an employer. Better candidates want to have a clear understanding of your expectations, to avoid making a move for short-term gain but long-term dissatisfaction.

Changing the Student's Perspective

The business world and the student world are two different realities. As a student, they acquire knowledge, research facts, prepare reports, discuss findings, and are tested on what they have learned. While there is a degree of cooperation with others required in the academic world, they are working to advance their personal interests.

It is different in the business world where they learn to apply this knowledge, and coordinate information from various sources, to define customer needs, and solve other people’s problems. Of equal importance in business is their ability to work with other people of different backgrounds, take direction, use initiative, extend themselves for their employer, and be viewed as a positive person who makes a valuable contribution to the department they are hired into.

There are certain basic expectations when you are looking at new graduates.

What are their skills, strengths, and experiences?

They need to express how they have applied themselves to their studies, put in the extra efforts required to learn, and give examples of these to the interviewer. If they worked in an industry related co-op placement, then there is some assessment that the employer will have, based on their employment reference.

As an entry-level employee with no co-op history, the employer doesn't have a track record to measure performance. Instead, look at grades, honors awarded, scholarships received, Dean's list citations, and related projects completed. Look at the part-time jobs that they held; how did they progress in them? The skills used in these jobs may be transferable to other employment.

Look for evidence of the ability to learn quickly, deal with problems, get along with team members, and work in an organized, self-motivated manner. Extracurricular activities are also taken into account. Their ability to organize, be involved, lead, assist, or contribute to a goal are good indicators of how they may perform in a business setting.

Employers hire people who have demonstrated that they care about their careers.

The fact of graduating is the first indication to a potential employer that graduates will care about the work that they do. Many employers have said to us that without an established track record, they will tend to hire someone because of the attitudes, energy, and personality strengths they see being a foundation, for training and future growth.

Confidence: self-assured in the ability to learn quickly; certain about one's interpersonal skills; self-motivated in seeking out new challenges to test abilities; a deeply held belief in self, values, standards, and personal worth.

Attitudes: the willingness to put in the efforts, to stay the extra hours, to cooperate with enthusiasm, to be eager to learn, to be realistic about expectations, to be patient with the time required to advance, and to be open to new challenges.

Responsibility: to be accountable and conscientious, to 'own' the tasks and duties assigned, to act with integrity, honesty, and with the team's goals in mind, to be someone that the employer can rely on to be available, and committed to doing a good job.

Energy: to work hard and seek additional work when a project is finished, being diligent and effective in using time, determined to complete work, in a dynamic and proactive manner.

You need to answer the following questions in assessing a graduate for employment:

- Will this person be easy to train and how long will it take them to learn their job?
- Will this person be staying long enough for us to benefit from having trained them?
- Do they have a good attitude - a willingness to cooperate and be a good team player?
- Will this person be someone who gets along well with other people?
- Will this person be someone who can take on additional responsibilities in the future?
- Does this person have realistic salary expectations?
- Is this person patient enough to work through the ranks?

What influences a manager in making an entry-level hiring decision? As recruiters, we see that favorable hiring decisions are often based on a person's attitudes and approach in entry-level situations. Hiring managers will tend to hire people that they can identify with on a personal level. If they show confidence, willingness to learn and work hard, and flexibility in an interview, they are making a positive impression. If they are demanding, arrogant, negative, or unrealistic, the opposite impression will be made.

Managers like to hire people that they like.

Employer Interviewing Styles

Hiring managers employ various techniques when interviewing potential employees. The following are some of the methods and tactics in corporate use.

The Group: Used primarily for volume recruitment, with two or more applicants interviewed together; answering open or rotating questions, to assist in determining applicant competitiveness and compatability if a team is being hired.

The Co-workers: One or more future colleagues ask questions with their superior to assess team qualities and the attitudes of prospective group members; interview roles and questions are established beforehand, allowing superiors to see group interaction skills of present and future staff, together.

The Behavioral: Applicants are tested on decision-making, problem solving, attitudes and values; open-ended questions are asked to encourage the applicant to talk about specifics; examples of how applicants handled certain situations are asked for, indicating applicant's character, values, judgment, and general maturity.

The Technical: Job knowledge is tested to qualify the applicant for further consideration; knowledge of procedures, processes, and technical industry requirements is verified, computer proficiency tests or similar assessment tools may be administered on the spot; the interviewer questions center on actual functions and daily duties.

The Aggressive: Interviewers at the beginning establish a challenging tone; stress is created to see how applicants react under pressure; knowledge and performance may be questioned with a skeptical attitude; the applicant's poise and self-control are probed for weak points.

The Written: Applicants are required to provide written answers to questions; determines basic skills, aptitudes, and work experience; provides interviewer with a record of responses and statements; indicates writing skills, grammar, and spelling.

Common Interviewing Mistakes Part I

- Poor, careless or inappropriate personal appearance
- Lack of interest and enthusiasm: passive and distracted
- Over-emphasis placed on salary, incentives and benefits
- Condemnation of past employers: bitterness and resentment
- Failure to look at the interviewer when speaking
- Limp or sweaty handshake, or over-aggressive, vise-like grip
- Late to interview and poor or no reasons given
- Asks no questions about the job, department objectives or the company
- Indefinite response to questions; vague and indecisive
- Over-bearing, over-aggressive and conceited or arrogant attitude
- Know-it-all or condescending attitude
- Inability to express self clearly: poor diction and grammar
- Lack of planning for career: no purpose and/or goals
- Lack of confidence and poise: nervous and ill at ease
- Expects too much too soon: impatient and demanding
- Makes excuses, evasive and tends to blame others
- Lack of tact, diplomacy and courtesy: ill mannered
- Lack of maturity and self-awareness
- Lack of vitality and demonstrates a low energy level
- Indecision and hesitation: timid and shy
- Low moral standards, cynical, lazy
- Intolerant: has strong cultural prejudices
- Inability to take criticism: volatile temper, easily agitated
- Incomplete and/or illegible application

Common Interviewing Mistakes - Part II

- Asking about the salary in the first meeting
- Sending a fawning follow up letter or message
- Asking for special hours of work
- Negative comments about current/past employer
- Not asking questions about the job
- Complaining and sounding like a victim

- Appearing too eager/desperate for the job
- Appearing to be too ambitious
- Wandering away from the topic being discussed
- Not asking for the job

About The Author

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