



New Hire Selection Process - Interview Preparation and Questions

Part 1: Before and After the Interview

1. Step Back and Review Needs

- a. Do you need to rearrange tasks among existing jobs before hiring someone else?
- b. What are the most important skills and abilities you are looking for? How are you going to determine if the candidate has them?
- c. What is easily trainable vs. what do they need day one?
- d. How will you assess if the person has the needed “soft” skills and work habits in addition to any technical qualifications?

2. Update Job Description, Prepare Job Posting and Screen Applications

- a. Job posting is for an external audience, so avoid internal jargon or titles.
- b. What would a candidate need to know? Does the job posting sell the job to the right audience?
- c. Screen applications and select your top candidates. (At NCAC, all candidates must submit an application through the agency’s online application process. If you receive a separate resume, direct the candidate to also complete an application online.)

3. Plan for the Interviewing and Testing

- a. **Who else should be involved** in the selection process? In other words, who do you want to “buy in” to the future success of the new hire? Will others be involved in the first round of interviews or only meet the final candidates?
- b. Are you going to do any type of **testing** (proofreading, data entry, case analysis and write up, presentation, etc.)? How do you know tests will predict success on the job? How do current employees do on the test? Give all candidates “tests” at same stage.
- c. How are you going to give the candidate a **realistic preview** of the job? Be sure to discuss the job details – hours, pay, work environment, dress code, workload, stress level, vicarious trauma, etc. Show final candidates their potential work space. It is often helpful to review a copy of the **job description** with the candidate.
- d. Select interview questions and coordinate with others who will be interviewing.
 - i. **Past performance usually predicts future performance.** Ask candidates to describe something they have actually done rather than what they “might” do or what they “would” do in a hypothetical situation. **Avoid generic questions**

that allow the candidate to simply make something up or provide a carefully rehearsed answer. Look beyond sales skills.

- ii. **Prepare** a list of questions ahead of time and ask each candidate the same set of questions. Ask yourself **how is this question going to help** me select the best candidate?

4. Schedule and Conduct Phone Interviews

- a. Great way to efficiently rule out candidates who may appear qualified on paper but are not actually a good fit with the requirements.
- b. The phone calls can be as short as 15 to 20 minutes.
- c. Don't be afraid to mention **pay rate** or work hours early in the process if that appears to be an issue.
- d. Based on phone interviews, select 3-5 candidates to meet in person.

5. Conduct Interviews and Tests

- a. Remember some candidates are very nervous so start with "easy" questions to develop a rapport and help the candidates relax a bit.
- b. Use your planned questions and take notes. Have written explanations for any tests.

6. Identify Top Candidates

- a. Consider making a chart that lists the job requirements vs. the candidates. Rate how well each candidate matches the requirements. Don't get blinded by bling!
- b. Bring back top candidates if necessary and have them meet more staff members.

7. Reference Checking

- a. Check professional references; verify previous, recent employment; and verify any needed credentials of your final candidate(s).
- b. Do **not** make an offer contingent on reference checking. Check first.

8. Job Offer

- a. Confirm pay rate with HR or appropriate personnel at your agency.
- b. Make offer contingent on **criminal** background checks (and **drug screen**) and **include this in writing in your offer letter**. Be sure any decisions based on the results are consistent with current laws (seek legal counsel if issues).
- c. Provide a **written offer letter** confirming title, pay, contingencies, and any other critical details such as work schedule or other agreements. Be sure to include an employment "at will" statement if you are an "at will" state. Have the candidate sign receipt of the letter and keep a copy in personnel file.

Part 2: During the Interview - Recommended Interview Questions

Many of these can be tailored to fit your specific situation.

General Interest, Personality and Cultural Fit

1. Why are you interested in this job?
2. What do you like about our organization? (Have they bothered to research?)
3. Why are you seeking a job change?
4. Describe one of the greatest work days of your life.
5. What's a funny thing that's happened to you at work lately?
6. What's one of the kindest things a coworker has done for you?
7. If you could start your own business, what would it be? What would the culture be?
8. What's the best working relationship you've had? The worst?

Technical and computer skills

9. This job requires you to _____ (or to have experience in _____). Give me an example of a project that demonstrates your technical expertise in this area.
10. Describe one of your most successful work projects that demonstrates your skill as a _____.
11. How would you describe your level of expertise with _____ (name a computer program/application such as Excel)? Give me an example that shows how you used your skills with this software.
12. Describe an issue or case they may have to deal with and ask how they'd handle it. If they don't volunteer the information, then follow up by asking them if they've had a similar issue in the past and what happen.

Initiative, innovation, ability to influence, communications

13. Give me an example of something you've done that was innovative. How did you get the idea? What happen?
14. Describe a time when you sold a new idea to your manager or co-workers.
15. Tell me about a time you had to introduce an issue at work that you knew would be unpopular. What was the issue? What did you do? What happen as a result?
16. Tell me about a time when you had to go "above and beyond the call of duty" to get a job done.

Team work

17. Tell me about a time when you had to work on a team that didn't get along well. What happen? What did you do?
18. Have you ever had to resolve a conflict with a coworker or peer? What happen?
19. Describe a time you supported a coworker who needed assistance. What did you do? How did you get involved?
20. Tell me about a time you worked on a great team.
21. What are some things you do to establish a good rapport with your coworkers?

Time management, organizational skills

22. Sometimes it is necessary to work in rapidly changing or unclear priorities. Describe a time you have had to work with changing priorities or incomplete information.
23. Describe a time you were asked to meet an unrealistic deadline.
24. What process do you use to establish priorities? To organize your time? What do you do when things don't go as planned?
25. Tell me about a time when you were up against a huge obstacle to accomplish a task. What did you do to stay motivated and to work through it?
26. Tell me about a project when you had to keep track of a lot of details. How did you handle it?
27. How do you keep your supervisor and/or coworkers informed of the status of your work? Give me an example of a time where it was very important to keep others involved of your progress.
28. Give me an example of a time you were assigned an uninteresting or boring project.
29. Tell me about a time that you missed a deadline. When did you know you were going to miss it? What was the impact? Who else was involved?

Customer service

30. Tell me about a time when you had to deal with an upset client, donor, etc. Tell me about a time that went well and about a time that you wished you had handled differently.
31. Tell me about a time when you had to communicate some bad news to someone who you knew was going to disagree or be defensive about the news. What happen?

Continuous learning and change

32. Tell me about efforts you have made in the last year to learn a new skill on your own. How did you do it? What did you learn? What prompted you to learn it?
33. Tell me about a time you were asked to take on a new task that required you to learn a new skill. How did you handle it?
34. From time to time we all receive feedback on how we can improve. Tell me about a time you received critical feedback from a subordinate (or a client, etc.). How did you respond to the feedback? What did you do differently as a result?
35. Tell me about a time when you had to implement a change you did not agree with.
36. How do you stay up to date with current trends in your field?

Handling stress, vicarious trauma

37. Tell me about a work situation that was stressful. What did you do to handle the stress?
38. Tell me about a time when you had an ethical dilemma at work. What did you do?
39. This job will require you to work with difficult and sometimes traumatic subject matter. What have you done in past jobs to handle the vicarious trauma and/or stress of this field?

Leadership Skills

40. Tell me about a time you led a successful team. What did you do to help the team succeed?
41. Tell me about a time when you had to lead an effort with your peers or with other departments. What did you do to build consensus?

42. What are two or three of the most important leadership traits? How have you put them into practice in previous positions?
43. Describe a time when you had to coach an employee who was underperforming.
44. How do you determine what to delegate and what to tackle on your own?
45. Tell me about the most difficult person you've had to manage.
46. Tell me about the most successful person you've had to manage.
47. How do you motivate your staff?
48. As a leader, do you think it's better to take risks or to follow the rules?
49. What are some of the things you do to establish your expectations with your staff?

Part 3: Not Recommended/Use with Caution

These questions seldom provide any details about what candidates will actually do and answers are often made up or coached. However, some can be useful ice breakers.

- What are your strengths? What are your weaknesses?
- Can you work under pressure? Under stress? In a team? By yourself? (umm...no?!) Rephrase your question instead.
- What was the last book you read or movie you saw? What's your favorite animal, etc.? These types of questions can be helpful in establishing a conversation or their personality but make sure most of your questions are more job focused.
- How would you and/or your friends describe your personality?
- If I talked to your former supervisor, what would they say? (Check references instead.)
- How do you define success? Teamwork? Leadership? And so on. Unless you then ask them to give you an example of how they have demonstrated that definition.

Part 4: Do Not Ask

Proceed with caution as you enter the following subjects! The following are examples of questions NOT to ask and alternative ones that are appropriate. (Source: SHRM).

Sex/marital status

Do not ask:

- Are you married?
- When do you plan to start a family?
- Do you have children?

Ask:

- Are you available to travel frequently?
- Can you work overtime with no notice?
- Can you work evenings and weekends?

Age

Do not ask:

- When did you graduate?
- When do you intend to retire?

Ask:

- Candidates must be 18 years old. Are you old enough to do this type of work? (This is really only an issue for possible minors if job requires an 18 year old.)
- Can you supply transcripts of your education?

Disability

Do not ask:

- Do you have a disability? Can you tell me more about your disability?
- Have you ever filed a workers compensation claim?
- Do you have a history of drug or alcohol abuse?

Ask:

- After reviewing the job description, “Can you do the duties listed in the job description, with or without accommodation?”
- If a worker has an obvious disability or reveals a hidden disability, you may ask the person to describe or demonstrate how the applicant would perform job duties.

Religion

Do not ask:

- What outside activities do you participate in?
- What church do you go to?

Ask:

- What professional associations are you a member of?

National Origin/Citizenship

Do not ask:

- Are you a citizen of the US?
- What country are you from?
- Where is your accent from?
- What nationality is your last name?
- When does your visa expire?

Ask:

- If you are hired, are you able to provide documentation to prove that you are eligible to work in the US?

Military

Do not ask:

- Please provide the status of your military discharge.
- Will you miss work to perform military service?

Ask:

- What experience did you gain in the uniformed service that is relevant to the job you would be doing?

Please feel free to share this document with other CAC colleagues.