

Preparing for an Interview



Podcast transcript

Hello, I'm Courtney Moon with UF Training and Organizational Development. I'm going to speak with you today about how to prepare for an interview and what to do or not do during the interview.

At this point you've reviewed several resumes and selected your top picks to interview—now you want to prepare to make sure it goes well—winging it can lead to you wasting your time, the candidates time, or possibly missing the mark in hiring the best fit employee for the position and the team.

To begin, review the job description of the position to determine the performance and technical skills, and other qualities that are required for the position. Create behavioral based interview questions for the identified skills and qualities that will give you insight into the candidates and help you assess the candidate fairly. Behavioral based questions are questions formulated to inquire a candidate's past job performance examples to determine if the candidate possesses the desired qualities. The best predictor of a candidate's future job performance is his or her past job behavior.

For example, instead of asking a question such as "do you have experience in customer service" ask a question that will give you more insight into their performance, such as, "Tell me about a time that you had to resolve a customer complaint. What was the situation? What did you do? What was the outcome?" Using open-ended questions that ask for specific examples of past behavior that will help you make a more informed decision about whether or not the candidate is right for the job. Also, make sure that all the questions you plan to ask are work related and that each candidate is asked the same set of questions. Once you've

prepared your questions, consider the logistics of the interview; hold the interview in a place of privacy that is free from distractions, such as ringing phones or interruptions from others. Inform the candidate ahead of time about the length of the interview and who will be present. Provide them with directions to the location of where the interview will take place and inform them of where they should park. Also, ask them if any accommodations are needed.

When the candidate arrives it is common to want to put them at ease and begin building a rapport with them. While the intent of this is good—there is also the potential of asking something that may be perceived as discriminatory. Often times this occurs before the interview even begins.

Questions that you would not want to ask include:

- You look familiar; do you have kids that go to PK Young?
- I saw on your resume that you have a PHD; you look too young to have a PHD, how old are you?
- I notice you have an accent, have you lived in the states long?
- My realtor has the same last name as you, are you two married?

Keep in mind that you should not ask any questions relating to age, family, marital status, pregnancy, gender, national origin and religion. Sometimes the candidate will bring up a subject in one of these areas—if so that's okay, but do not ask follow up questions about the inappropriate topics.

Stick to safe introductory questions on neutral topics, such as:

- Did you have any trouble finding the location?
- Isn't the weather today great?
- Can I offer you some coffee or water?

This will avoid the potential of getting into legal hot water. Before beginning the interview, take a moment to explain how the interview will be conducted. Will you be asking all the questions, will a panel of people be conducting the interview?

Then, briefly explain the job and the job environment and ask if the candidate has any questions regarding the vacancy. This is to help the candidate to have a better understanding of the job so that they can make an informed decision about the job. Next, ask questions about past job performance using the consistent set of questions you prepared in advance. This will allow you to assess all candidates fairly and consistently. Probe to clarify for understanding when you need more

specific or focused information. Sometimes the candidate is nervous or perhaps doesn't understand the question and only partially answers it. It's okay to follow up by saying, "thank you—but could you provide me with a specific instance or example."

After you have asked your questions, allow the candidate to ask any questions that they might have—and finally, close the interview by summarizing the next action steps—including the timeline for making a decision and how they will be contacted regarding the decision.

Additionally, you are encouraged to consult the appropriate [recruitment checklist](#) to assist you with the UF hiring process. These checklist serve as a tool to assist hiring managers, department administrators and search committees when recruiting candidates for positions in alignment with the UF recruitment policies and procedures along with federal guidelines and statutes.

Preparing for an interview benefits not only you but your candidates as well. When you're organized and prepared you'll make a good impression—and it will be easier for you to select the best candidate for the job.