

Interview Checklist

A guide for employers and hiring managers

The job interview is a crucial stage of the hiring process. Not only is it the primary tool used by most employers to assess talent suitability, but it can also influence a candidate's decision to accept a job offer. For companies looking to attract A-list talent, conducting a seamless and professional interview process is key!

We're here to help with our step-by-step guide on how to conduct an effective interview that will put you on track to make the best hiring decisions.

Where to start

A best-practice approach to creating a structured and consistent interview process includes the following steps:

1. Clarity on what is required in the **“right” candidate** in terms of experiences, competencies and mindset based on role responsibilities. Also reflect on the characteristics and personalities to determine which candidates will be the right “fit” for your organisation.
2. Defining and understanding your **organisational culture**. This will help you determine the desired employee behaviours and beliefs that are aligned with your organisation.
3. Creating a **selection matrix** that helps interviewer/s assess each candidate based on established job-related criteria.
4. Lean on internal **HR and talent acquisition teams** who will provide guidance and support throughout the hiring process.
5. Determine **interview participants** and who is included in decision making for the appointment. Give careful consideration to interview panellists.
6. Creating a list of job and role specific **behavioural interview questions**. Behavioural interviews use questions or statements that ask job candidates to share examples of specific situations they've been in - sometimes referred to as the STAR method of interviewing.
7. Prepare all **documentation** in advance. Make sure each panellist has a copy of the job description, candidate CV and is familiar with the approach being used to score candidates. Ensure panellists prioritise reviewing all material prior to the actual interview date.
8. Agree on the **interview format**, this includes whether the interview will be held in-person or remote, the location of the interview and its duration, as well as any expectations of candidates, for example if a pre-prepared presentation is required.
9. And finally, **schedule the interview** and communicate all the necessary information to the selected candidates.

How to conduct the interview

Assign roles including the **lead interviewer**. It is the lead interviewers' job to set the tone for the interview and keep everyone on track. Because of the importance of the role, you may want to consider assigning this to someone skilled in effective interview techniques.

Choose the location wisely. Prior to the start of the interview, make sure the assigned space is ready and suitable for the task. You want to ensure it is a comfortable environment where all participants can participate in a meaningful way. Round tables are ideal for encouraging relaxed conversation. Avoid overly large rooms or seating that resembles an interrogation. For virtual interviews, make sure the technology is working and try to limit distractions.

Aim to have all panellists ready at least 15 minutes in advance of the start time for each interview.

Interview Stages

1. Introductions: allocate a few minutes

Setting the tone and energy of an interview should be done with professionalism and a positive attitude. Your objective is to establish trust and ensure a relaxed, conversational atmosphere.

During this stage, each panellist should briefly introduce themselves. This includes name, role title, preferred pronouns and if appropriate, how they interface with the role the candidate is interviewing for.

2. Interview process and organisational context: allocate a few minutes

The lead interviewer opens with an explanation of the interview process and a brief discussion of logistics including the intended duration. To give the candidate further space to relax into the interview, we suggest taking a moment to provide an overview of the company and the role. Keep this brief - remembering that the interview is an opportunity for the candidate to shine.

3. Questions from the panel to the candidate: majority of the interview time

Stick to your interview script and commence the formal part of the interview by asking your pre-prepared questions. Consider opening with an initial ice-breaker question to build rapport, for example ask the candidate to provide a brief insight into their career history to date.

Maintain conversational flow with your line of questioning. Starting with standard 'technical' questions and then moving onto more personalised behavioural and context-based questions that provide a deeper insight into a candidate.

4. Questions from the candidate to the panel: allocate a few minutes

Top talent are in demand and they will be using the interview as an opportunity to evaluate a company and determine whether the role is a good fit for their career aspirations.

5. Conclusion: allocate a few minutes

Reiterate the next steps in the recruitment process and importantly, when the candidate can expect to hear back from you. Be clear on who their point of contact is. End the interview thanking the candidate for their time and interest.

What to do post-interview

Allocate time immediately following the interview to allow the panellists to collect their thoughts, complete any paperwork and share a short debrief with the group even if it is only for a few minutes. If you are following an interview schedule, make sure you also have sufficient time to prepare for the next candidate.

Your next step is to meet more formally, typically at the conclusion of all interviews, for a longer conversation and to evaluate all interviewed candidates. Your goal is to collaborate on a decision moving forward in terms of consensus on preferred candidate/s.

The next step in the recruitment process may include additional rounds of interviews, further assessment and testing, as well as other due diligence and probity checks.

Make the selection of your candidate a priority. You're at risk at this stage of the process of losing candidates who may disengage from the process or who are pursuing other opportunities. Maintaining communication with candidates is important, and this includes constructive feedback.

What else to consider

Check out our recent blogs for further advice and guidance:



[The Ultimate Executive Onboarding Checklist](#)



[How To Find The Right Executive Recruiter](#)



[How to Prepare for an Interview with an Executive Search Firm](#)

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