

Interview Tips: How to Hire the Best Person for the Job

By Brad Schwartz

Question: I've narrowed down the qualified resumes. Now how can I be sure to hire the best person for the job?

Answer: Spend as much time preparing for the interviews as your applicants.

These days, most employers schedule 2, 3 or even 4 rounds of interviews before choosing the best candidate to hire. As an interviewer, this will take some careful planning and evaluation on your part. Interviewing is a crucial component to the future success of your property. By investing the time in preparing for your interview process, you greatly increase your chances of hiring the best person for the job and avoiding a bad hire.

BEFORE THE INTERVIEWS

Set your goals. Be clear on what you and your company are looking for in candidates. Review a job description or list of skills needed. Clarify your evaluation criteria and the overall goal of your interviewing efforts in a group meeting so that all interviewers are well prepared.

Develop your core messages. What are the two or three key messages that you want to convey during the interview process to attract your top candidates? Remember, your applicants are interviewing your company too. Articulate strong core messages without any PR fluff. Core messages may include what it would be like to work at your property or what makes your company unique. All interviewers should actively convey your key messages through words, attitudes or actions to applicants.

Review the resumes in advance. As simple as this sounds, many interviewers do not follow this advice, and it becomes glaringly obvious (and somewhat embarrassing) during an interview. Jot down questions or notes in advance. Candidates will feel that interviewers care enough about them and the position to do their homework.

Prepare your candidates. When scheduling interviews, prepare candidates by describing the company, details of the position, background and titles of the interviewers, how long the interview will take and anything else that will minimize wasted time while the candidate interviews within your company. The better you prepare applicants, the more time your interviewers can spend on the important issues: determining the candidate's skills and fit within your property's culture.

DURING THE INTERVIEWS

Use telephone pre-screening. Telephone pre-screening is an inexpensive method of identifying good candidates for employment. You can verify experience, workplace preferences and salary needs to screen in desirable candidates' — and screen out inappropriate ones. A telephone

Use behavioral interview questions. Studies prove that the behavioral interview is the best method for evaluating a candidate's potential. Behavioral interviews are based on the premise that past behavior is the best predictor of future success. If certain behaviors are important to you, such as showing initiative, being a team player or adapting to change, ask the candidates to provide past examples of when they actually exhibited the behavior. Some examples of behavioral interview questions are:

- Give me an example of a time when you initiated something or took a risk.
- Can you describe a time when you failed and how you bounced back?
- Tell me about a situation in which you showed leadership.
- Can you talk to me about a time when you had to deal with change or conflict?

Develop unique supplemental questions for each applicant. In advance, devise a series of questions that allow your applicant to highlight the individuality of his or her experiences, such as:

- Why did you go back to school for your X degree and why now?
- What are the most important things you've learned?
- If I were to ask your former supervisors to describe your strengths and areas for development to me, what would they say?
- What do you know about us and why would you want to work here?

AFTER THE INTERVIEWS

Check supervisory references. Often, interviewers make a mistake in overlooking this step. Be sure your candidates are what they say they are and have the skills they claim to have before presenting a job offer.

Be smart when hiring for your next position. Prepare in advance and use your interviewing time wisely. Your hiring decisions will shape the future of your property.

Thank you for the positive response to the debut of my column in last month's issue. Each month, my column will focus on a recruitment or retention question or concern facing our property management industry, as submitted by The APTS readers. Tell me which issues affect your company. What is important to you? Email your queries to me at brad@msbresources.com.

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