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HOW TO CONDUCT A JOB INTERVIEW

Here at Axial Recruitment we'll deliver to you an excellent shortlist of candidate for the position you are trying to fill. Then, it's over to you. When interviewing a candidate for your business, how you phrase questions, when you ask them, and how you follow up can go a long way toward affecting the quality and value of the answers you get.

HAVE A FOCUS

You want to have a reasonably specific idea of what information or insights you're expecting to gain from the interview. Decide ahead of time what you want to know more about and build your interview strategy around that goal.

MAKE EVERY QUESTION COUNT

Every question you ask during a job interview must have a specific purpose. That purpose may be to elicit specific information, produce some insight into the candidate's personality, past performance, or simply put the candidate at ease. Tie questions to the criteria defined in the job description.

PAY ATTENTION

Listening attentively is difficult under the best of circumstances, but it's often an even tougher challenge during a job interview. Fight the tendencies to draw conclusions before a candidate has completed an answer or to begin rehearsing your next question in your mind. Consider writing down your questions before the interview begins and then direct the full measure of your concentration to the candidate and what they are saying.

DON'T HESITATE TO PROBE

Whenever a candidate offers an answer that doesn't address the specific information you're seeking, nothing's wrong with asking additional questions to draw out more specific answers. If a candidate talks about the money she saved her department, ask how much and what, specifically, she did to accomplish that. A candidate may give you valuable background on specific abilities if your questions are more penetrating.

GIVE CANDIDATES AMPLE TIME TO RESPOND

Give the candidate time to come up with a thoughtful answer. If the silence persists for more than, say, ten seconds, ask the candidate if she wants you to clarify the question. Otherwise, don't rush things. Use the silence to observe the candidate and to take stock of where you are in the interview.

SUSPEND JUDGMENTS

Try to keep your attention on the answers you're getting instead of making interpretations or judgments. You'll have plenty of time after the interview to evaluate what you see and hear. You don't want to prejudice yourself in the beginning of the interview so that you fail to accurately process information that comes later.

TAKE NOTES

Memories can do tricky things, leading people to ignore what actually happens during an interview and to rely on general impressions. Taking notes helps you avoid this. Just make sure that you do so unobtrusively so the candidate doesn't feel like she has to pause for you. Give yourself a few moments after the interview to review your notes and clarify them or put them into some kind of order.

VARY THE STYLE OF QUESTIONS

You can usually divide questions into five categories, based on the kinds of answers you're trying to elicit. Here are some types of questions that you can use in your interview:

- **Closed-ended:** Questions that call for a simple, informal answer — often a yes or no.
- **Open-ended:** Questions that require thought and oblige the candidate to reveal attitudes or opinions. One type of open-ended question is the behavioural interview question. With a behavioural question, candidates are asked to relate past on-the-job experiences to situations they are likely to encounter in the position being discussed.
- **Hypothetical:** Questions that invite the candidate to resolve an imaginary situation or react to a given situation.
- **Leading:** Questions asked in such a way that the answer you're looking for is obvious.
- **Off-the-wall:** Questions that, on the surface, may seem bizarre but may actually be revealing in the answers they elicit, such as "What literary character do you most closely identify with?"