

### The Art of Interviewing

by Linda Rosso

Interviewing is a lot like art. While it may be intimidating at first, developing an appreciation for art can open your mind and encourage you to see things differently. Just like a good piece of art, a well-executed interview can be both illuminating and satisfying.

The current talent shortage is likely to get worse over the next decade, so finding the right employee on the first try is more crucial than ever. And despite these tight economic times, industries such as health care, technical services, and food services are still adding jobs. According to the National Center on Education and the Economy “by 2020, the United States will need 14 million more college-trained workers than it will produce”.

To be successful in finding valuable talent, hiring managers need to know how to properly interview a candidate. A productive interview is one in which you learn how the candidate’s skills and experience specifically relate to your job opening and, just as importantly, if the candidate would be a good “fit” culturally. Determining cultural fit during the interviewing process is essential and involves assessing how the values of the individual mesh with the values of the organization.

So what’s the right way to conduct an interview? Certainly building rapport is important, but in a tight labor market, you must also be prepared to sell your organization and your opportunity to the candidate. Ask yourself, “Why would someone want to work in this industry, for this company, or for me?” And remember your audience. For instance, Millennials (people born between 1980 and 1995) are particularly interested in career development, learning opportunities, and flexibility.

Ideally, no one goes into a meeting without first knowing what the meeting is about and what needs to be accomplished. The same applies to interviews, but too many times a hiring manager walks into an interview without having looked closely at the resume and says, “Tell me about yourself.” Such a broad question can be confusing to the candidate and is unlikely to elicit the information you need to make a good hiring decision.

Valuable candidates know they are expected to do their homework before an interview, and they’ll expect the same of the interviewer. Reviewing the resume and jotting down some specific questions will make the interview much more productive. Ask questions that will provide you with a good understanding of the candidate’s strengths and weaknesses. Remember to set some parameters at the start of the interview by telling the candidate how long you expect it to last, and allow some time for questions.

When you talk about the company, be honest about both its strengths and weaknesses, and provide examples. Often interviewers make the mistake of talking too much. Some talk to fill those uncomfortable silences, while others get caught up in trying to “sell” the position to the candidate—effectively eliminating the need for the candidates to “sell” themselves.

Finally, close the interview by discussing next steps. If you have reservations about the candidate, talk about them. Raising your issues may resolve them or produce a possible solution that you might not have thought of on your own.

Interviewing is an art, but you don’t have to be Rembrandt to get the job done well. Utilizing the basic tools discussed here will go a long way toward mastering the interview and ensuring that you commission the best talent for your position.

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