



Printing Industries of CALIFORNIA
-Human Resources-

**Guide to
Interviewing & Hiring**

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INTERVIEW PREPARATION

The objective of the interview is to gain information regarding the person's ability to perform the "minimum" or "essential" requirements of the job.

Section 1 - Preparing for the Interview

1. Types of information desired:

a. Job Related: The information sought during the interview must be job related behaviors or experiences.

b. Skills and Experience: The interviewer must discover the specific skills and knowledge the applicant has to perform the functions of the job.

2. Interviewer's task:

a. Comfort: The interviewer must make the applicant as comfortable as possible to help create an environment conducive to a productive dialogue.

b. Information: The task is to gain information about job related behaviors, skills, training or education that will help in later choose the most qualified person for the job.

c. Multiple Experiences: It is important for the interviewer to gather multiple experiences/information during the interview on important functions of the job.

d. Gaps in Employment: The interviewer must screen resume or application for employment gaps and determine activity of applicant during non-working periods.

Section 2 - Recording Information

1. Advice Applicant: The interviewer should advise the applicant, at the beginning of the interview session, if notes are going to be taken by the interviewer.

2. Record Job Requirements: The interviewer may want to list in advance of the interview on the note pad the specific job related experiences or skills being sought.

3. Most to Least Important: The interviewer should prioritize from most important to least the job requirements on the note pad. This will prompt the interviewer to gain the most information from the applicant on the essential aspects of the job. It will help the interviewer to make a more effective hiring decision at a later date.

4. Questions to be answered: The job experiences and skills the interviewer is trying to discover from the applicant should be listed as a question on the note pad. An example for a

customer service applicant would be: “Describe a situation in your work experience where you had to handle an irate customer. When this occurred, what did you say and do?”

5. Application Blank: The interviewer must not record any information on the application blank. The interviewer should use a separate sheet of paper. An applicant, as well as an employee, has the legal right to a copy of any application blank he or she has signed in the State of California.

6. Record Job Related Information: The notes should contain comments from the applicant that are job related. Information given by the applicant voluntarily to the interviewer that is not related to performing the job or considered “impermissible under the State Law” should not be recorded.

Section 3 - Interviewer Mistakes

1. Personal Bias: The interviewer must be aware of their biases and how they may influence the interpretation of information received or evaluated during or after the interview. If the interviewer's personal feelings interfere with their objectivity, someone else (a qualified second party) should perform an interview with the applicant.

2. Halo Effect: The interviewer must avoid being overly influenced by one area of strength or achievement in the applicant's background as not to explore adequately all areas of job relevant background.

3. Rationalization: When receiving or evaluating information from applicants, the interviewer must avoid rationalizing their answers. The information should be recorded as stated by the applicant. If the interviewer does not have a clear meaning of an answer, they should ask further open-ended questions to understand. The interviewer must not rationalize or surmise what the applicant might have meant in their response.

4. Rushing the Interview: The interviewer who rushes to complete, or does not allow adequate time to evaluate the applicant's background, makes many poor and costly business decisions in hiring new employees. The cost of a bad hiring decision is loss of production; training and employment costs; greater pressure for skilled employees covering the employee's failings; higher unemployment costs, and wrongful terminations.

Section 4 - Interview Basics

1. Promptness: Start the interview on time.

2. Time: Allocate sufficient time in schedule for the interview.

3. Interruptions: Interview in an office or area where there will not be disturbances either from people or telephones.

4. **Neutral Setting:** Choose a neutral setting. A conference or customer room is normally the most neutral place to interview.
5. **Multiple Interviews:** If more than one interview is going to take place, inform the applicant at the first interview that there may be other interviews.
6. **Decision Maker:** Let the applicant know in multiple interviews who will make the hiring decision.
7. **Greeting:** Greet the applicant in a courteous and professional manner. The interviewer should introduce them self; their position in the Company and role in the selection process.
8. **Impediments:** The interviewer should remove impediments; get out from behind the desk; lean back in the chair; and establish a relaxed profile maintained throughout the interview.
9. **Sincerity and Interest:** Be sincere and maintain interest in what the applicant is saying.
10. **Interview Agenda:** Communicate the interview agenda to the applicant. Consistently follow the same agenda for all subsequent interviews.
11. **Non-Verbal Communications:** Be aware of non-verbal communications. The interviewer must keep their hands free and attempt to control changes in facial expressions, eye contact, body movements or posture. These changes may affect the comfort level of the applicant and the flow of information from them.

Section 5 - Interview Agenda

This agenda should be discussed with all applicants at the beginning of the interview. It is important to interview in the order of the items presented below. This will lend consistency to the interview and develop the best information from the applicant.

1. **Time:** Indicate the time set aside for the interview.
2. **Basic Description of Job:** Give a description of the basic requirements of the position.
3. **Earliest Experiences:** Inform the applicant they will be asked to start with their earlier experiences, proceeding to the current ones, in the order they have listed in their application form.
4. **Fuller Explanation:** Indicate to the applicant, when information from previous experiences and jobs is concluded, more information will be given about job requirements and the Company.

5. Applicant Questions: At this time, let applicant know that answers to their questions will be addressed about the Company or the position.

6. Final Hiring Decision: Let the applicant know, at the end of the interview, approximately when the final decision will be made about the job opening and the method that will be used to inform applicants of the Company's employment decision.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND TECHNIQUES

Section 1 - Interview Processes

1. Open End: Questions should be open-end, requiring the individual to respond with conversation about their job-related experiences, rather than with a yes or no answer. Example: Avoid "Are you a skilled Estimator" and instead ask "What are the basic components of an estimate?"
2. Active Listener: The Interviewer must listen for key words the applicant says following with questions related to the word of how, what and why (actions and motivations). An example would be: "You mentioned dependability being important in performing the job? Give me an example in your past work experience where dependability was important and why?"
3. Eye Contact: It is important try to maintain eye contact during the interview.
4. Non Verbal Communications: The interviewer should not communicate their feelings about information from the applicant through their verbal and non-verbal reactions.
5. Receiving Negative Information: The interviewer must remain neutral when receiving information that is seemingly negative or unfavorable from the applicant. This includes changes in their voice tone or pitch, and non-verbal communication such as raising the eyebrows or frowning. With unfavorable information, the interviewer asks the applicant to describe in greater detail the circumstances surrounding the unfavorable information. The interviewer's desire must be to learn more about the circumstances surrounding the negative information. An example is: "You stated you were terminated for damaging the equipment? Please give me more detail of what occurred that was considered by the Company as damaging the equipment?"
6. Stay with Agenda: When the applicant strays from the interviewer's question or interview agenda, the interviewer should interrupt tactfully, guiding the applicant back to the agenda or question. An example of this would be: "That is interesting but I want to get back to our discussion about quality". The agenda will help the interviewer control the conversation during the interview process.
7. Gaps in the Application Form: The interviewer must satisfy the original questions raised from the individual's application or resume by filling in the gaps in the application blank with information from the applicant.
8. Other Job Related Information: The interviewer should terminate the "Information Gathering" portion of an interview, by asking the applicant if there are any other job related skills or experiences that have not been covered.

Section 2 - Interview Questions

1. Extenders: A technique the interviewer can use to continue the flow of information is to simply ask "why", "tell me more", or "is there anything else". These terms should be used throughout the interview to discover the applicant's experience; how they went about doing their job functions; and to discover the reasons (the motivation) for their job related choices.

2. Likes or Dislikes: Ask the applicant what he/she liked or disliked about a particular job experience, their boss or a Company policy. Always follow with the extenders "why" or "tell me more" to gain insight into the reasons for the applicant's feelings or choice of actions.

3. Laundry List: Ask the applicant for three to five important responsibilities or requirements, or the interviewer can list three to five responsibilities, of the position. It is a good practice for the interviewer to write down these requirements on a note pad so they do not forget them. From this list the interviewer can request the applicant to do some of the following:

a. Their Experience: Have applicant describe his or her specific experience (what or how they would perform a task) related to each requirement that was specified in the laundry list. An example: "You stated the make ready on a press is the most important responsibility of a press person. In the order of performing a make ready, please describe what actions you will take from beginning to end in performing it? When you perform the first step you described, what actions do you take to set up the rollers?" An example of a final question the interviewer can ask is: "Why do you consider the make ready on a press to be the most important responsibility of a press person?"

b. Strengths: Have them list in descending order which of the items applicant considers their greatest strengths.

c. Most to Least: Ask the applicant to rank the list, stating which requirement of the job is the most to the least critical in performing the job. Follow with "why" or "tell me more" for insight into reasons for applicant's choices.

d. Enjoyed Doing: Ask applicant which job requirements or responsibilities they enjoyed the most or the least and the reason for their choice.

e. Prior Supervisor's Response: The applicant can be asked to respond to how their prior supervisor might answer a question asked them by the interviewer. If a formal evaluation in the prior job has occurred, the applicant could be asked in a reference what their supervisor would say about their performance. The interviewer could then ask the applicant if they agree with this assessment of their performance. Differences between the applicant's response and the prior supervisor's assumed response may be followed with a question "Why the differing viewpoints?" or "How did you deal with this difference?"

f. Contrast or Compare: Request the applicant to contrast or compare the duties or responsibilities of two different positions held in the past. Then ask which position, and types of duties and responsibilities, applicant enjoyed the most or the least, or which the applicant performed the best and "why."

g. Personal Meaning of Words: Listen carefully for key words the applicant may use, such as quality, attitude, and work ethic. The interviewer should ask the applicant to describe their personal meaning of these words. The interviewer may want the applicant to demonstrate the meaning of the word(s) by describing job related actions or events.

Section 3 - Discrepancies/Contradictions and Misunderstandings

1. Clarify: The interviewer in the initial, follow-up interviews or further telephone discussions should clarify discrepancies or contradictions in information introduced by the applicant during the interview.

2. Approach: The interviewer, seeking clarification regarding a discrepancy, contradiction or misunderstanding should ask the following questions:

a. Clarification: "I would like for you to clarify for me what were the specific actions that resulted in your termination from ABC Company?"

b. Discrepancy or Contradictions: "You said the following about quality in the work you did for Company A and this for Company B. Why the differing approaches?"

c. Misunderstood: "My understanding is you were terminated from ABC Company for these reasons. If I have misunderstood, please reiterate the reason for the termination."

Section 4 - Closing the Interview

1. Favorable View of Company: It is important to close the interview session with the applicant leaving with a favorable feeling about the Company. The applicant will talk to others about their interview experience potentially creating a negative or positive feeling towards the company's employment process. Once information about experience is complete do the following as required stated in your agenda:

- a. Further Company Information: Give applicant further information about the Company and greater detail about the current opening. If multiple interviews are taking place, the final interviewer should give this detail.

THE HIRING DECISION

The purpose of the hiring decision is to select the applicant, based on information received during all the interviews and background checks, that best fits the requirements of the position.

Section1 - Selection Process

1. Complete Interviewing Process First: Complete all interviews and perform background or reference checks before initiating the hiring decision. All applicants interviewed must be given a full and complete interview.

2. Strengths and Weakness: Identify the strengths and weaknesses of each candidate related to the job requirements. It is important, if the interviewer has not already done so in the note taking for each interview, to list the most "essential" duties of the position first, descending to the duties of less importance that may be non-essential duties of the job.

3. Prioritize the Importance of Functions: The interviewer/reviewer may want to assign a percent of importance of 100% for each duty or job function. This makes the "hiring decision" more effective, since the interviewer can first note which of the applicants is most qualified by each duty, in descending order of their importance.

4. Critical Missing Information: If critical information is not clear or is absent, follow-up questions with the applicant should be done. This could be completed by telephone or e-mail. If other interviews with the person are going to occur, have the critical missing information explored during these interviews.

5. Bias: It is important for interviewers and the person(s) making the hiring decision to recognize potential personal bias. If the interviewer is uncomfortable about an applicant, for other than job related information received in the interview, it may be this is due to a personal bias. The interviewer may not choose the most qualified candidate and the bias may later be unlawful. Having a neutral person, or multiple interviewers, involved in the hiring decision will help to avoid bias.

6. References and Background Checks: The Company must attempt to gain references from prior employers. Not only is this an important source of job related information, it may protect you in a "negligent hiring or retention" claim at a later date.

7. Noting Deficiencies: If the interviewer has done a thorough job of exploring the new employee's background during the interview, they will be knowledgeable of work related deficiencies in the new employee's experience or skills. This awareness will help the supervisor address the new hires work related deficiencies through training or education.

Section 2 - Notification Procedure

1. For Those Chosen: For those who are chosen, a personal telephone call should be sufficient. In the case of certain positions, this call might be followed up with a "carefully" worded offer letter.
2. Those not Selected: For those not selected, the Company on its letterhead should send a courtesy letter of decline.

-- SAMPLE OFFER LETTER--

<Name of Company>

<Date>

<Name>

<Address>

Dear <Name>:

At this time, **<Company Name>** is pleased to extend you an offer for employment. I enjoyed the opportunity to meet with you and learn more about you and your special skills and talents. I was impressed with your qualifications and feel that you would make a strong addition to the **<Company Name>** team. At this time I am pleased to offer you the position of **<Position>**. Your compensation will be **<\$ per hour> or <\$X salary per workweek>**. You will be paid **<Options: weekly, twice monthly, every other week on _____ day>**.

I hope that through our meeting, you also learned more about **<Company Name>** and the benefits of working for us. Many benefits are available to you as a full-time employee of **<Company Name>**. These benefits include, but are not limited to the following:

- Medical and Dental
- Retirement or 401K Plan
- Paid Holidays, Vacation, and Sick Leave
- Life Insurance

Your employment is contingent upon you signing and returning a copy of this offer letter by (Date)_____. Your first day at **<Company Name>** will be **<Start Date>** at **<Time>**.

I look forward to having you join the **<Company Name>** team. Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Due to the nature of the Company's business, its customers, and other needs, the employment relationship is, and is intended to be, at will. Either you or the Company may terminate the employment relationship at any time, for any reason, with or without cause or prior notice. This letter, in no way, should be construed as any kind of employment contract.

Sincerely,

Company Representative

Date

Acceptance Signature

Date

-- SAMPLE REJECTION LETTER--

<Name of Company>

<Date>

<Name>

<Address>

Dear <Name>:

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for taking the time recently to speak with **<hiring supervisor>** and myself in regards to our need for a **<position>**.

While we enjoyed speaking with you about your qualifications, I wanted to inform you that we have decided to hire another applicant.

Thank you again for your interest and good luck in all your future endeavors.

Best regards,

<HR manager>

<Title>