



A bad interview feels like a bad dance. Everyone shuffles around unsure of what to do or say, quietly wishing the song would end. Don't laugh. You caused this uncomfortable scene.

Bad interviewing can cost you more than just a little embarrassment, too. CareerBuilder reports that nearly one in four businesses quantify the price of a bad hire at over \$50,000 per position. The interview is usually your last chance to get the decision right.

So before you head to the dance floor, you may want to evaluate your interviewing process. We're here to help. We'll show you how to prepare, what skills to sharpen and how to get the most out of the interview...without breaking the bank.

It's time to put your dancing shoes on.



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ask.

Everything stems from good preparation. It's the tree trunk from which the branches of good conversation and leaves of clever anecdotes blossom. Everyone loves witty leaves! So do your homework.

You should already have an idea of your applicants from the screening process. They passed your basic set of tests, so now's the time to dive deeper. Boil your goals down succinctly; you really need to accomplish 3 things:

- Check their facts to make sure they haven't lied their faces off

- Understand their career goals, so you don't need to hire someone new two months later

- Determine their fit inside your company culture

You have a tough job, absolutely, but don't use that as an excuse to rush the process or let too much time lapse. Once you take these scheduling steps, stick with them, and treat your applicants the way you'd like to be treated. Give them feedback in a timely manner and don't let their resumes fall into business oblivion.

Don't Let Too Much Time Pass between your initial outreach and subsequent interactions. Time can prove toxic to sales and hires, so don't be a stranger for longer than a couple weeks. Think consistency. You shouldn't call them a day after receiving their resume only to take a month to get back to them.

Think about it this way: truly great talent won't hang around the open market very long before getting swept up by someone else.

Don' Speed Thro,gh So,rcing, Screening and In er ie ing to hire as soon as possible. Most small businesses can't afford to wait months in their search for the right person. Still, you have ducks to get in a row.

Give yourself the time to be prepared

Have the list of interview questions ready

Set the location

Gather a team of coworkers to assist in evaluations and decision-making

Know what you want in the position

If those bases are covered and your applicant pool impresses you, then go for it! Just remember to take a breath and be sure your preparations at least match those of the applicant.

No perfect time frame exists. No magical number on the calendar will deliver the best experience. Look at the number of jobs you need to fill, the available interviewing team and what an efficient time frame would be for your company.



We highly recommend:

You assemble a group of coworkers to assist your hiring efforts

You use multiple interviewers for each candidate

You all discuss what you want specifically from the meetings and what sort of data you'd like to gather

You know what the ideal candidate looks like (professionally)

The team should come to agreement on the common goal. That is to say, everyone agrees on:

What positions need filled

What tasks each position performs

The culture your company wants to expand

The list of overlapping and exclusive questions each interviewer will ask

Who will interview which candidates and when



Will you hold multiple interviews in the same day? Will multiple interviewers take part in the same session? Let your personal situation guide you. We'd recommend saving time by holding multiple interviews in the same day. Just have single interviewers conduct each one.

That doesn't mean 13 straight interviews.

This way, you don't have to invite the candidate back needlessly, and you don't exhaust him or her through hours of interrogation. Plus, interviewers will have easier times comparing answers in the same day.

Reality has funny ways of messing with plans though, so evaluate your company resources. Try to find the most efficient solution for you.

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You'll want to come up with these before the interview. All the interviewers should ask a set of questions they deem valuable, although they can personally tailor and direct the style of the conversation to their liking. Different kinds of questions beg different results though.

Use a mixture of what we call Behavioral, Fact-based, Hypothetical and Left Field questions to paint a full picture of the candidate.

Fact-Based

Clean and simple, these ask who, what, when and where. Tee these easy questions up first so the candidate feels comfortable early in the conversation.

Do you have a degree?

What was your last job?

How many years have you performed this job?



Behavioral

Now you look for something the candidate did in the past that would likely repeat in the future. You get into the how with these personality-seeking questions.

How did you lead a group of people at you last job?

What's an example of efficiently working as part of a team?

Tell me about a time when you overcame a workplace obstacle to meet a deadline.

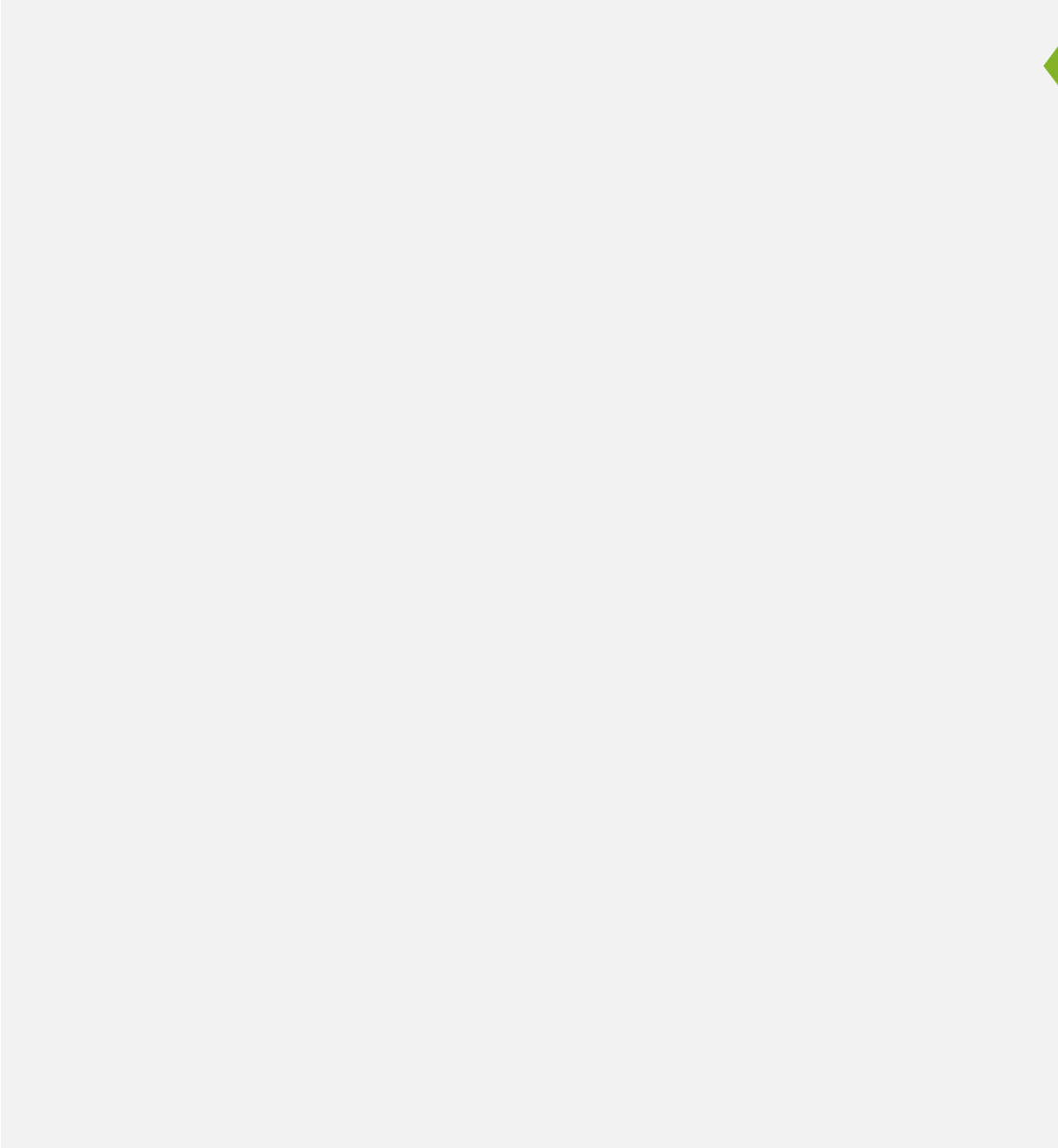
Hypothetical

These questions can frustrate both sides, but don't ignore them altogether.

How would you react if you found your boss doing something illegal?

Would you ever steal, if you knew you wouldn't get caught?

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Not all interview questions are created equal, nor are they all legal. Let's go through a few examples of what you shouldn't say and how to legally express the idea.

Illegal: Where were your parents born? Are you a US Citizen?

The Goal: Can this person work in the country and do they have the necessary paperwork to prove it.

Legal: Are you authorized to work in the United States? Also, if multiple languages are relevant to the job function, you can ask about their lingual abilities.

Illegal: How old are you? When did you graduate from college? What year is your birthday?

The Goal: Is this person old enough to legally work for you

Legal: Are you over the age of 18? Remember that age discrimination is illegal. Don't risk setting yourself up for an age discrimination lawsuit.



Illegal: Do you have a disability? Can you please report your medical history? Does your family have any history of illness?

The Goal: Can this applicant perform the job without extreme accommodation, while remaining healthy and safe?

Legal: First you should thoroughly describe the job, its tasks and physical responsibilities. Then ask: Are you able to perform these job functions individually or with reasonable accommodations?

Your question list will help you navigate the tricky, and often gray, legality of interview questions. Stick to questions strictly about job functions, be wary of the personal questions that can get you into trouble, and follow your prepared set of legal questions evaluating bona fide occupational qualifications (BFOQ).



So the schedules were made, the interviewers assigned and the questions assembled. All systems go! Here are some things to consider in the actual interview.

Everything you do in this meeting effects the way this candidate views your company. It's not just an evaluation on your part. They're evaluating you too. You have no better time to convince this candidate why they want to work with you.

Now, the nature of the economy and interview process in general gives you more leverage in the interaction. Don't take the situation as your free pass to get whatever you want. The last thing you want is to push away the perfect candidate.

You can go crazy considering the details, so we'll just limit it to a few that can have a major effect, with small fixes.

Room

The room you pick will say much about your office, coworkers and culture. If you decide to host the interview at the office, think about what particular room best exemplifies your great company culture. On the other hand, if you lead the candidate through a sea of cubicles where everyone looks miserable, they probably won't feel too enticed.

Chair Position

This probably sounds mundane, but consider how you face your interviewees. You're trying to learn about people, so provide them with a comfortable environment to open up and express themselves.

Try switching up the old, *I sit on his side of the desk, or sit on her side, interview*. Go with one where nothing separates you so dramatically. A couple couches if you have them in the lounge will do. A couple chairs in an office or coffee shop work well, too.

The point? You want an environment where your candidates feel free to talk and where you can get the information to influence your decision.

Now you get to follow the plan and enjoy the company. A good interviewer won't simply ask questions. He or she will turn those questions into a conversation. The ideal interview would be one where you don't need to ask anything at all.

Don't rigidly cut the candidate off in subjects he or she sounds passionate about. At the same time, know where you and the conversation need to go. You don't necessarily power the ship, but you do need to steer it.



We can't stress this point enough. Take notes everywhere in the process. Take notes when your team goes over what everyone wants beforehand. Take notes throughout the interviews and then jot down your opinions afterward.

Be as detailed as you can, as often as you can, so you have ample material to pull from during decision time. Days, weeks and multiple interviews will blur those detailed memories you think you won't forget.

Things can go wrong no matter how well you plan. Such as...

Questions don't relate to necessary skills or behaviors

Multiple interviewers don't use consistent questions

Questions have equal value

Multiple interviewers don't agree on "correct" answers

Questions don't correctly evaluate the short and long term
(You want a coworker to do the job well, first and foremost, but you also want a coworker to fit your company's culture for the long haul and grow along with it)



Notice how thorough planning before the interview and open communication with your teammates throughout the process answers all these common problems.





The unfortunate reality of hiring is its unforgiving nature. Even the Olympics have medals for second and third. The hiring process gives everything to number one, and nothing to everyone else. Most people unfortunately fall on the side of everyone else.

Be honest, straightforward and sincere. Don't hide behind business-talk or double-speak. You're dealing with people here.

Inform the applicant in a way that coincides with their place in the interview process.

If they're an early round out:

Use a concisely written email explaining that they won't be eligible for the position any longer.

Thank them for their interest and tell them (CLEARLY) that you don't think the open position matches their skills and experience.

Use software to easily send emails to multiple unqualified applicants at one time.

If you've already spoken to the applicant on the phone:

Give them the courtesy of using it again to inform them of the situation. Yea, it's tough and it can get awkward, but you'd want the same respect



If they came in for an interview:

Gauge the applicant and decide between a phone call and another “exit-interview.” You don’t want to waste their time, but you at least owe them human contact. If they ask for reasons, have one or two.

It all comes down to respect and honesty. It won’t be easy and you won’t feel good about it. Rejection is the largest part of the hiring process though.

Silver linings may shine just around the edges. Just because a candidate doesn’t fit the job now doesn’t mean he or she won’t fit something later. You can even keep the applicants organized by merging their profiles, applications and resumes. You may just salvage a bridge if you handle yourself well.

Make the tough decisions. Stand by your thoughtful choices. You’ll both respect each other more in the long run.



Plan well, communicate often, and take great notes.
Do those things, and you'll notice how much easier the
conversation flows.

Who knows? You may even end up enjoying the dance.

