

Tips for Conducting an Interview

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When you are the one doing the interviewing, remember that we form impressions — and tend to hire — according to a candidate's social skills. Of course we think we are right in our hiring decisions, but we also tend to like, and thus hire, people who are like us. The traits that get someone the job may not be the traits needed to do the job.

Whether you are a human resources professional hiring for your company, a business owner looking for a new customer service person, or a manager interviewing a job candidate or doing a performance appraisal, you can use the following tips as a checklist for your next interview.

1. Be prepared. Many interviewers spend only a minute or two looking at a résumé to prepare for an interview. Have in mind the following three details.

- What you're looking for in an employee
- Your first three questions
- What you will say and do when closing the interview

Your preparation affects not only the interview but also the job seeker's impression of your organization.

2. Be on time. Don't make interviewees wait and sweat. Candidates say 48 percent of interviewers come in late or otherwise make them wait.

3. Have an open attitude. According to research, 54 percent of interviewers admit they have taken an instant dislike to a candidate. You want an accurate snap, not a stereotype. Research says that, contrary to lay wisdom, highly trusting interviewers are significantly better than others at detecting lies.

4. Stay open and attentive. Keep your body windows open and watch your feet.

5. Create a natural back-and-forth conversation. Fifty-one percent of candidates feel as if they are being cross-examined or interrogated.

6. Listen more and talk less. According to interview coach Carole Martin, the candidate should talk 80 percent of the time, the interviewer 20 percent. Halfway through the interview session, check out the flow. It may help your listening ability and your memory to take notes.

7. Remember the candidate's name. Thirty percent of candidates say their interviewers did not remember their names. You can even create cards or name tents (place cards) to help you remember the candidate's name and the candidate to remember yours.

8. Take your time. When you are stressed and/or the candidate is, you may naturally want to rush through the process in a flight response. Breathe, take breaks, and put a reminder note in front of you to slow down. If you are a rabbit interviewing a turtle, make sure you allow ten seconds of silence after you ask a question. Watch that you don't just jump in to speed things up. Candidates say that 70 percent of interviewers act as if there's no time to talk.

9. Smile. This makes you look welcoming — and less like a judge and jury.

10. Take the candidate to the door and make sure to leave a good last impression.