

INTERVIEW AND ENGAGEMENT

The guidelines in this series are intended for those responsible for human resources within companies wishing to develop the best value from and for their employees. For further information, check out the author of these guidelines, at www.innerbalancing.ca.

Preparation. The interview and engagement process is probably the most important aspect of any staff experience. A well developed and planned interview procedure in line with the company's overall intention creates some key benefits:

- It's the first impression people have of the company; remember that everyone who gets a great impression is likely to become a customer or recommend others, even if they do not take up an employment opportunity.
- Consider the cost of employing and training people only to discover, or have them discover after a month or two, that a different choice would have been made if only the interview had been more complete.
- Be aware that the interview experience is the first company experience for prospective employees. Where there is a full understanding of what work is required, what standards the company expects and what career development opportunities are available right from the start, it will be far easier for the employee to become a full part of the team.

Application Form. Anyone interested in applying to the company for a position will be asked to complete an application form. The application will give brief details about the company and information about the interview and engagement process. The intention is that each person has the same information and that the company asks the same questions of each person before they go any further. Since this application form may be the first piece of information each has about the other it is important that everyone is treated equally. The application form will ask for a résumé and a letter of application.

First Contact; first impressions. The company encourages people to join us who fit the profile and have the qualities desired by our company. Bearing in mind that we are all each others' customer, we will take into account the initial impression that the applicant makes on other staff.

Job description and qualities required. These are two different things and both are important. A job description will include the roles, responsibilities and duties that are expected, together with information about lines of accountability. Qualities (or competencies) required are the skills, abilities, levels of experience and knowledge needed to provide the relevant service, to be a part of the company team together with the desire to learn and therefore participate fully in the development of the company. If they do not already exist, prepare a job description and a list of qualities required for the relevant area of work. The job description and qualities required will be given to the applicant at the time of being called for an interview as part of their own preparation.

The résumé. A résumé will always be requested before taking the next step. A good résumé will include information about education and training, work and volunteer experience, leisure interests and any special skills that the applicant has to offer. An accompanying letter should provide information about personal hopes for the future and reasons for wishing to join the company, together with information about the specific work sought and times available. The résumé will be retained by the company and filed in central personnel records so that it may be retrieved as needed.

Initial interview. The company interview provides the first formal experience where applicants have the opportunity to be listened to and to convey their personality, their ideas, their abilities and experience. If successful at the first interview there will be a follow-up second interview as described below. The person carrying out the initial interview will normally be the manager to whom the applicant will be reporting.

The process for the initial interview is as follows:

- Set the scene, create rapport

- Give information about the interview procedure, establish that you will be making notes of the responses given by the interviewee (and make those notes: they are important, especially if you are interviewing more than one person for the same position)
- Ask the applicant an open question about themselves (e.g.: “tell me something about yourself”)
- Ask the applicant what s/he knows about the company and the specific job and if there are any questions
- Clarify any important areas of information and answer any questions
- Ask specific questions relating to the job and the qualities required (e.g. “what training have you had in this area of work?”)
- Ask for examples of specific instances where the applicant can describe their experience and what s/he did (e.g. “tell me about a time when you had a difficult client and how you dealt with the situation”)
- Ask if there is anything else that the applicant wishes to say or has questions to ask of the interviewer (this can be an important indicator of the interest and abilities of the applicant)
- Discuss the compensation offered for the post and whether this is a staff or contracted position
- Say what the next step is. The options are: “Thank you; we will be in touch with you in the next day or two”, “I’d like to invite you to demonstrate what you can do”, “I would like you to attend a second interview with another manager.”
- Show the applicant around the main areas of the company (this is not a tour) and introduce him/her to people who happen to be there.

Be aware that this interview is for you to discover the suitability of the applicant for the available job or role. The emphasis is on you listening and finding out, not on your giving the applicant a whole lot of information at this point. If you are talking for more than 25% of the time this is too much. The first interview should last about 45 minutes.

If you are satisfied from the interview that this person has potential, take the next steps:

- Arrange for demonstrations if applicable.
- Speak to the team leader/manager who will be taking the second interview and share your notes with that person, asking them to invite a relevant staff member to that interview.
- Speak to other staff who may have spoken with the applicant and ask for their impressions.
- Rate your own performance during the interview and jot this in your portfolio.

If you are clear that this person is not a suitable candidate for being a company team member, call them and say so. Be both honest and kind in this.

Demonstration. Where the applicant is seeking a position that demands a particular aptitude or direct service to clients, a demonstration may be requested. Use a five point-scale to determine your assessment of the applicant’s abilities.