



MASTERING THE HIRING INTERVIEW

Hiring 101: Sweet 16 Rules to Master the Interview*

Part 2: Rules for Interview Effectiveness

By Dr. Michael Abelson

It is time for the main event, the actual interview. Hopefully, your pre-interview tasks recommended in Part 1 of this article series are complete. Your job benchmark has identified the primary personal characteristics needed to succeed in the job. Everyone involved in the interview has a list of questions they will ask and an interview process they will follow. The initial screening has identified only those people who have the credentials needed to succeed in the job. You have followed these rules and are prepared for the actual interview.

Rules for Pre-Interview Effectiveness

Most will say, what comes next is “common sense.” According to Voltaire, “common sense is not so common.” Stuart Chase sarcastically states that “common sense is what tells us the earth is flat.” That was common sense until 1492 when Christopher Columbus sailed to America. Follow the seven “common sense” rules mentioned below and you will have a more effective hiring process.

Rule #4 - Ask More, Listen More, Talk Less

Real estate company president Virginia Cook once told me, “we have one mouth and two ears, and should use them in that proportion.” She was absolutely correct. Research suggests that whomever talks the most in the interview, feels the best about the interview. You want the interviewee to feel the best in the interview, so if you offer them a job, they say “yes” to your offer. Furthermore, whoever is asking the most questions is learning the most during the interview. Since the purpose of interviews is to learn as much as you can about the

person you are interviewing, “ask more, listen more, and talk less.” It has a doubly positive outcome; you learn the most and they feel the best. This one rule increases both the possibility of making the best hiring decision and increases the likelihood the candidates will accept your job offer if you choose to offer them a job.

Rule #5 - Take Notes

It is not just the very old who may forget things. We all do. Interview two or more people the same day, do your usual job-related activities, experience life related events, and you are almost guaranteed to forget something important you learned during the interview. It is very important to take accurate notes. Ask the job candidate if they mind you taking notes during the interview. They will most likely say they are fine with you doing so. If they say “no,” that tells you something about them. If you do not take notes during the interview, you need to make notes immediately afterwards before you forget. What factual information did you learn that is pertinent? What non-verbal body language occurred and when? What things did they say that surprised you? What were



their numerous strengths and any limitations? You are spending a lot of money interviewing; your time, costs (if any) to bring in the candidate, etc. You will lose valuable information if you do not take notes. Have a digital or paper list of questions the interviewer should respond to regarding the interviewee and have the interviewer send the complete set of interview notes and their answers to these questions to a central location or person no later than the end of the day of the interview. No exceptions allowed.

Rule #6 – Give a Realistic Job Preview

It is very important for job candidates to know the very truth about the job. Many research studies demonstrate it is much more effective to tell the truth about the job, than to stretch the truth or tell things that are inaccurate as a way to entice a job candidate. Inaccurate information during the interview may result in a wrong decision for the job candidate. This may result in the candidate taking the job, if offered, and then leaving months later because it was not the right fit for them. Worse yet, they could continue in the job, performing only marginally for years in the future. Furthermore, because someone is not giving a realistic job preview, the job candidate is getting contradictory information from different people in the organization. This and the other issues mentioned above potentially contribute to distrust of the interviewer or the interview process and a negative response if the job candidate is offered the job.

Rule #7 – Be Yourself

Interviewers sometimes feel a little self-conscious or

nervous during an interview. Some technology-oriented people prefer interacting with machines rather than people. Whether you enjoy the interview process or not, it is important to be yourself. It is okay to let the job candidate know this is not “your usual space” or it is not what you usually do in your job. They will respect you more, feel more comfortable, and communicate with you more when they feel you are genuine with them. Of course, if you like interviewing and feel comfortable throughout the process, being yourself should be easier. Either way, being genuine and yourself helps with the interviewer-candidate connection, promotes communication, and leads to a better hiring decision for the candidate and the organization.

Rule #8 – Be Honest

So, what is the difference between being honest and rule #6 (give a realistic job preview) and rule #7 (be yourself)? Rule #6 deals with talking honestly about the job. Rule #7 talks about being yourself and sharing any uncomfortableness you may be experiencing because interviewing others just is not you or what you normally do. Rule #8, be honest, concerns always answering candidates’ questions honestly. You may feel the need to be “tactful” when answering some questions, but you need to be honest with your answer. This is where following the “golden rule,” “do unto others as you would have them do unto you,” is important. For example, the candidate asks you “do you like working here.” My suggestion is to be honest, even if the answer is “sometime,” “not all the time,” or something else. Here is an example of a way to answer the interviewee’s question. You may be feeling very stressed because you have been working numerous 60+ hour weeks lately and feel exhausted. You may say something to the effect: “Things are sometimes crazy around here. We are growing very quickly and from time to time there is a very heavy work load. But people here are incredible and are very committed to the organization’s success”. Many may tell you to lie if you do not like the job, are feeling very stressed, etc. My advice is to follow Rule #8 and rules shared elsewhere in this article series, AND be tactful, but honest with your response to this and similar types of questions.

Rule #9 – Be Respectful

Following this rule has become more challenging. Different age groups have different types of expectations for the workplace. Things allowable in the past, no longer seen appropriate. These are a few of the many



reasons why being respectful in more challenging and so important. Respect others physical space and do not get too close physically. When I was doing clinical work at an adult mental health center in the 1970s it was permissible to gently touch someone around the knee or the elbow as a form of comfort. Not so now. The actual language you use during the interview is also important. Stay away from slang expressions or other such comments that can be misinterpreted. Also, do not be over critical of the job candidate or anyone else in society. The interview is about the extent the job candidate is a fit with the job, not how they may react to others in society.

Rule #10 - Close Strong

People may not remember some of the specific comments said during the interview. They will remember the interview process and how they felt during and when

they left the interview. It is important to have a strong close of the interview and for the job candidate to feel good when they leave. To close strong, summarize high points of the interview. If you promised any additional information to the candidate make sure to follow up and get that information to the job candidate in a timely manner. Shake hands or have some other appropriate closing gesture. And, very importantly, tell them the next steps in the process and what they can expect next. The close is the last thing that occurs during the interview and one of the things that the job candidate will remember most. Make it memorable in a positive way.

At this point we have examined rules for the pre-interview and the interview itself. Part 3 of our *Mastering the Hiring Interview* article series focuses on rules that occur before, during, and/or after the interview.



Michael Abelson, B.A., M.A., MBA, Ph.D. is an expert on interviewing, hiring, team building, retention, and leadership selection and development. With over 40 years of experience consulting, keynote speaking, training and using objective assessment tools, his processes and HR solutions have saved clients time, money, and from making many poor hiring decisions. He can be contacted at Dr.A@abelson.net or 979-696-2222.

