

# Interviewing for the Non-Human Resources Professional

Here at Intellect Resources we live suspended in the interview world continually scheduling, prepping and debriefing candidates and clients for the interview process. And, throughout the years, we discovered that interviewing can be just as daunting for the interviewer as for the interviewee (candidate).

Unfortunately, much of the interview literature available is geared towards candidates and human resources professionals. But, little is geared towards those who find themselves interviewing future employees and/or coworkers with little or no human resources training.

If you can identify with these overwhelmed interviewers, here are a few practical tips to help you plan and execute a successful interview:

## ***Set the tone***

You are not a news reporter, FBI agent or teenage parent. Instead, you are trying to determine if this candidate will be successful with your company, your team, your project and so on. The interview will be more successful on both sides if you can keep the interview comfortable, relaxed and positive. (Comfortable doesn't mean you can chat extensively about the weather, gravitate to more personal topics or crack jokes.)

## ***Be Courteous***

Remember that your personal professional reputation as well as that of your company is on the line when interviewing. Candidates talk. Negative buzz spreads much faster than positive buzz. So be on time, be polite, be respectful and keep your polish and professionalism in tact.

All of these tips are designed to help you conduct a successful interview. A successful interview, in our definition, is a give and take dialogue between two like professionals to determine if they will be successful in working together to achieve common goals.

## ***Stay in Control***

You are the interviewer. If you do not plan the interview with specific questions and keep control throughout the interview, the candidate can take the ball and run with it, leaving you without the answers you need to make an educated decision. Prepare especially for long-winded candidates who may need you to interrupt and guide the conversation back to the original or next questions.

## ***Take buzz phrases with a grain of salt***

Candidates love to throw buzz phrases like good communicator, dedicated employee, motivated, and hardworking around in interviews and plaster them all over their resumes. Unfortunately, many candidates think words like these

can win the jobs. Any time you hear a buzz word, be sure to pause and ask them to “explain further” or “expand on that” or “give me an example.” You’ll be surprised how quickly some candidates will back pedal.

### **Body Language and Tone of Voice**

Body language says it all. If you don’t believe us consider that 55% of first impressions are based on body language, 37% are based on tone of voice and only 7% are based on words that are actually said. First impressions via phone are based 86% on tone of voice and 14% from actual words. So don’t get overwhelmed by tone, body language, dress, polish and professionalism; also focus on the words that they say. Furthermore, keep your own body language and tone in check.

### **Listen**

This quote says it all. *“What do you think is the number one complaint women have about men – they don’t listen! Now a women doesn’t really know whether the man has listened or not but the only thing that really counts is the woman **experiencing being heard.**”* Listen to your candidates, they appreciate it and when you listen, you can make an informed decision on their candidacy.

### **Be compliant**

Questions about age, gender, nationality, sexual orientation, religious and political affiliations and the like should be avoided to prevent legal issues. If answers to these are relevant to performance on the job, seek advice from your HR department on how to phrase appropriately. For example, you cannot ask, “Are you a US citizen?” or “Where were your parents were born?” But, you can ask, “Are you authorized to work in the United States?”

### **Compare Motivators & Experience to Job Requirements**

If a candidate’s motivators and experiences do not match the role you are interviewing for, then the likelihood of success is very slim. To make an assessment, focus your questions on what motivates the interviewees and what skills they have to offer you. I also find that comparing them to current and/or previous super stars and failures on your team will help you determine if they will be successful or not. Example questions follow:

- “What are you top three career motivators?”
- “What was your reason for accepting your first position?”
- “What is your reason for looking outside of your current position?”
- “What was your biggest career success?”
- “What are your strengths? Please give me an example.”
- “Tell me more about your day to day responsibilities.”
- “What management style do you work best under?”
- “Describe your ideal working environment.”

- “How well do you interact with clients/team members/management?”
- “How do you handle stress?”

### ***Use open-ended questions***

Use open-ended questions to encourage more detailed dialogue. It will help you further explore their answers and fit for the role. Avoid leading questions as candidates will answer with what you WANT to hear and not what you NEED to hear. Finally, stay clear of questions that begin with “Why.” Candidates can become defensive.

### ***Wrap up the interview with a next step***

There is nothing worse for you and the candidate than not knowing the outcome of an interview. You can liken it to a small child’s wait for Santa Claus or a high school senior's wait for college acceptance letters. The uncertainty can drive a candidate to stalker status. I guarantee they can fill up your voicemail and email with unwanted inquires about next steps. Whenever possible, lay it out for them and set their expectation at the end of an interview.

Good Luck!