

Selecting Employees

HUMAN RESOURCES INFORMATION SERIES FOR SUPERVISORS

Overview

Finding and hiring the right employee can be a time consuming and laborious process. Reviewing applications, conducting interviews and checking references takes time. Unfortunately, attempts to take short cuts in the hiring process can result in selecting a candidate who later presents time consuming performance problems and can lead to additional costs to recruit, train, and select a replacement. Spending the time necessary to select an excellent candidate is more efficient than spending time and resources necessary to coach, discipline, or replace an inadequate employee. This document provides tips for screening the best candidate for your vacant position.

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I. The Requisition and Advertising Process

Regardless of whether the position you're filling is an existing opening or a newly created one, the Personnel Requisition Form is the mechanism that drives the process (attachment A). The hiring supervisor must complete Section I and secure signatures from the Department Head and the Division Vice President. For newly created positions, the President's signature must be included. Upon completion of Section I, the requisition should then be submitted to the Employment Manager and Treasurer's Office for approval.

Included with this information should be an updated job description, signed by the hiring supervisor with any changes indicated. Failure to submit the job description may delay the recruiting process. For non-exempt positions, any substantial change to the job may require that it be re-evaluated under the reclassification system before it can be advertised.

After receiving all necessary approvals, the position will be posted throughout campus, on the University's website and Human Resources Job line which can be accessed at extension 7452. The job posting is updated and distributed on the first day of the work week and summarizes job duties and requirements. Job changes and advancements within a department may be completed before a position is posted.

Supervisors are encouraged to consider all internal candidates before any consideration is given to external applicants. If a search to fill a position fails to produce qualified candidates from within the University, advertising may be done through outside local and/or regional and national resources. Recruitment and advertising may also be conducted simultaneously within the University and through outside media if it is warranted. Before ads are placed, Human Resources will determine if there are any qualified candidates from the applicant pool.

For professional job searches, the hiring supervisor must submit a Candidate Search Form (Attachment B). Important to note on this form is the application deadline date and the date that the screening of applicants will be completed. Letters sent by Human Resources to candidates will inform them that if they are not contacted within a week of the screening-completion date, they will no longer be considered for the position. Advertising preferences must also be listed. The hiring supervisor should submit a draft of how he/she would like the ad to appear. Human Resources will then review the ad, make necessary changes and place it in the requested media outlets. All resumes for advertised positions will be directed to Human Resources for inputting and Affirmative Action reporting.

Upon completion of this process, resumes will be forwarded to the hiring supervisor.

II. The Interview Process

Upon receiving applications and resumes from Human Resources, the supervisor should begin screening out applicants who do not meet the requirements of the job or whose application or resume pinpoint undesirable tendencies (e.g. frequent job change, inconsistencies, etc). Please be aware the reason you use to disqualify a candidate must be entered on the Affirmative Action log. This will be addressed a little later.

After the pool has been narrowed down to a manageable number (four or five), interviews should be scheduled. This is usually accomplished through the office of the hiring supervisor although Human Resources can assist. Ideally, all parties who will directly or indirectly supervise the employee should be part of the interview process, if possible. The actual interview should take place in a quiet setting uninterrupted by phones, visitors, etc.

Before the first question in the first interview is asked, the hiring supervisor (and others who will be conducting interviews) should do a little homework. Preparation should include understanding the content of the job and what one is looking for in an applicant, reviewing the application or resume of the interviewees and making notes that will be referenced later on in the interview and preparing a list of questions. If a search committee is being used, a screening matrix of experience, education and competencies should be developed. Each interviewer should complete a matrix for each candidate. Some believe asking the same questions of all the candidates lends itself to making more effective comparisons. "Patterned" interviews are also an excellent defense against discrimination claims in the selection process.

Each interviewer has his/her own style and format when conducting interviews. There are those who profess that interviewing is an art and not a science. It's true that conducting interviews often involves some subjectivity. Inexperienced interviewers often find themselves making a hiring decision based on a "gut feeling". Seasoned interviewers, however, are successful when they employ sound interviewing skills. One key way to help make the proper hiring decision is to focus on the past behavior of the candidate. Asking open-ended or behavioral questions forces the candidate to talk about how they handled situations in their past work history. The answers they give will provide the supervisor with insight about how the candidate might handle future situations.

Here are some examples of open-ended, behavioral questions:

1. Give me an example of a situation where you had to deal with an irate student or parent. What did you do?
2. Tell me about a situation in the past where you disagreed with a supervisor's decision; how did you handle it?
3. Tell me about your prior jobs and why you left each of them.

The point here is that the candidate cannot just give a yes or no answer, but must reflect on his/her past and provide the interviewer with information that can be used to predict how future situations might be handled. When the candidate provides a vague response, the interviewer must use a follow-up question to obtain specific information. This redirects the discussion to specific behaviors. For example, "Tell me exactly what you did," or "Exactly how were you involved?"

The use of behavioral, open-ended questions will elicit responses that will provide the supervisor a glimpse of how a candidate handled situations in the past and may assist the supervisor in foreseeing how the candidate may perform if hired.

One of the most frequently asked questions is: What can I ask an interviewee? The best answer may be: Whatever has to do with the job you are trying to fill, but one must be careful. The ever-changing world of labor law prevents employees from asking certain questions that may appear to be job related but may also infringe upon an individual's rights if they are in a protected class. Questions related to a person's race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability or handicap must be avoided.

Following is a list of common mistakes in interviewing. It may be helpful to review each of these and determine if a new approach or an adjustment is necessary to improve your interviewing skills.

III. Common Mistakes in Interviewing

1. Halo effect or a situation where one single characteristic dominates our judgment of the candidate. Note that this effect can be positive or negative.
2. Interviewer bias or your own attitudes and beliefs can enter into the picture and influence your hiring decision.

3. Failure to listen is often a problem. The interviewer should be able to generate questions that urge the candidate to talk more than the interviewer. In this case the interviewer must listen in order to make an intelligent hiring decision.
4. Lack of behavioral questions. Interviewers usually don't ask enough behavioral-type questions. Note that this is where you gain information on past experiences and behaviors. Also, remember that the applicant's past behavior is the best predictor of his or her future behavior. These types of questions make the interviewing process more objective and less subjective.
5. Illegal questions. If a question you want to ask a candidate is not related to the job, there is a good possibility it may be illegal. Stay focused on job-specific questions.
6. Failure to analyze the job vacancy. It is highly unlikely that you will find a truly successful candidate when you, yourself do not fully understand the job. How can you possibly fill a vacancy without a thorough understanding of what is involved?
7. Misleading the candidate. If this happens on a conscious level - you are truly aware that you are misleading - then your chances of retaining the candidate you selected may be slim. By misleading the candidate you may bring him/her "on board" but the real question is for how long?
8. Making a premature commitment. Similar to misleading the candidate, you shouldn't make promises if you can't deliver. Don't commit yourself to anything until you can thoroughly analyze the situation and obtain input from Human Resources.

IV. Avoiding Lawsuits

An interviewer making a hiring decision must be able to explain the factors that led to that decision. It is important to be aware that anything and everything an interviewer has written or said can be probed or questioned in a discrimination claim.

Following are some suggestions that an interviewer should consider:

1. Remember to focus on job-related questions during the interview. If you cannot ask a question that is "job-related," then it doesn't belong in an interview.
2. Remember to take notes - but be cautious - some notes such as "nice girl" or "mature" can support age or sex discrimination.
3. Don't offer reasons of rejection. Instead, if pressed, you can offer "We selected those we thought would best meet our current need."
4. Remember to be consistent in your application of job requirements/skills.
5. Avoid asking questions about marital status. Married? Engaged? Divorced?

6. Do not ask someone's age, what year they graduated high school or college.
7. Avoid questions dealing with a person's color, sex, religion, or national origin.
8. Do not ask an applicant how many children he/she has, who will care for them, or if the applicant plans on having children.

As a result of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, inquiries pertaining to a disability or handicap are not permitted. They include but are not limited to the following:

1. Do not ask whether an applicant ever filed a workers' compensation claim.
2. Do not ask about an applicant's past drug or alcohol use. (You may ask about current drug or alcohol use.)
3. Do not ask how many days the applicant was absent from work last year because of illness.
4. Do not ask whether the applicant has any serious illnesses, back problems, mental illness, etc.
5. Do not ask whether the individual has a spouse, child or other family members with disabilities.
If an individual has an obvious disability (such as a missing limb, or the person uses a wheelchair),
 - (A) Do not ask how the individual became disabled.
 - (B) Do not ask about the severity of the disability.
 - (C) Do not comment in any way on the person's physical condition.

Please see a more inclusive list of questions you are not permitted to ask later in this section.

Questions you may ask include but are not limited to:

1. You can ask about the individual's ability to perform essential job functions.
2. You may ask about current use of illegal drugs or current alcohol use.
3. You may ask about an applicant's attendance at prior jobs, if the question is limited to days off or number of days late for any reason, and is not limited to days missed due to illness.
4. You may ask whether the individual has ever been involved in an accident on the job that injured co-workers or members of the public.
5. You may state the department's standard for attendance.

V. Sampling of Interview Questions

The following is a list of questions which may prove helpful in conducting interviews:

1. Why did you leave your last job? (prior jobs)
2. Why did you choose the University to apply for a job?
3. What are your strongest (weakest) personal qualities?
4. What are your long-term goals? Where do you hope to be in five years?
5. Tell me about yourself. Expand on your resume (application).
6. What have you enjoyed most and least about the work you've done?
7. What work achievement has given you the most satisfaction?
8. Why did you choose your particular field of work?
9. What qualifications do you have that makes you feel you will be successful in this position?
10. Why are you particularly interested in this position?
11. Describe to me the leadership style you used in your last position
12. Tell me about your prior positions and what you learned from them that will help you perform the duties of this position.
13. Describe to me a situation when you had a difficult customer (student, parent) and how you handled them.
14. Tell me about a situation you faced on the job that required you to make a quick decision without a great deal of background information.
15. If you could change something about your last job, what would that be and why would you change it.
16. What are your salary requirements?
17. Tell me about your supervisory experience. How many employees? Were they secretarial, professional?
18. This position requires some overtime hours including some evenings and weekends, does this present any problem for you?
19. How would your last supervisor describe you?

QUESTIONS RELATED TO SPECIFIC TYPES OF POSITIONS

I. Clerical/secretarial work:

1. What word processing systems have you worked with, and what are the advantages and disadvantages of each?
2. Describe the kinds of telephone and receptionist duties you have had, being specific about the number of calls and walk-ins you received in a typical day.
3. Describe your past experiences with scheduling of appointments.
4. Give me an example of a task you performed that required attention to detail, and what you did to ensure accuracy.
5. What are some of the more unusual assignments you have been given?
6. What kinds of filing systems have you used and/or created?
7. Which decisions could you make on your own, and which did you refer to your boss?
8. What kinds of reports did you develop, create, or produce?
9. What volume of mail did you typically process in a day?
10. What kinds of correspondence have you written on your own initiative?

II. Supervision:

1. Describe the positions in which you have had supervisory responsibility. How many people have you supervised and in what kinds of positions? Did you have hiring/firing authority?
2. Give an example of a time when you were disappointed by an employee's lack of accomplishment and what you did about it.
3. What are the generally accepted steps in progressive discipline?
4. In your experience, what kinds of things motivate an employee?
5. Describe what is meant by "problem employee".
6. Describe a sticky situation with an employee and what you did about it.
7. Describe an innovative way you handled a conflict involving two or more of your subordinates.
8. What kinds of things can a supervisor do to create a positive working environment?
9. What training and experience do you have in listening skills?
10. Approximately how many people have you personally hired in your career?
11. Describe an effective performance planning and review process.
12. What methods of communicating with subordinates have you found most successful?
13. What recognition and reward systems for subordinates have you found most effective?
14. What is the role of a supervisor, in your opinion?
15. What are the major responsibilities of a supervisor, in your opinion?
16. What is an effective training and orientation program for a new employee?
17. Describe the most serious complaint an employee brought to your attention and what you did about it?
18. Give an example of the most novel idea an employee presented to you and what you did about it.
19. What is meant by the term "protected class" under civil rights laws?
20. Under federal wage and hour laws, describe "exempt" and "nonexempt" employees.

IV. Management:

1. What was the level of your decision-making authority in past positions?
2. Describe a decision you made that had an unhappy result.
3. Give me an example of a decision you made that backfired and what you did about it.
4. Give an example of a decision you made that turned out better than you believed possible.
5. Describe a time when you made a decision in the absence of a clear policy regarding the issue.
6. Have you experienced political pressure that interfered with getting the job done?
7. Describe your experience with setting goals and objectives.
8. Describe your experience in developing and monitoring budgets.
9. What fiscal authority have you had in past positions?
10. Give an example of a situation in which a budget overrun was necessary to accomplish a goal.
11. What is the most effective method for setting priorities, in your opinion?
12. What would your current/past employer tell us about your ability to organize your work?
13. Describe a time when your goals conflicted with the goals of the organization and what you did about it.
14. What is your most innovative accomplishment?
15. What is your most creative idea that was turned down?
16. What experience do you have with writing?
17. What have you done in the past five years to improve your writing skills?
18. What have others said about your writing ability?
19. What experience have you had with public presentations? What was their purpose, and what visual aids and kinds of notes did you use?

QUESTIONS NOT TO ASK CANDIDATES

1. What kind of child-care arrangements do you have?
2. Does your spouse expect you to be home to cook dinner?
3. What will you do if your children get sick?
4. How do you get to work?
5. How many children do you have?
6. Does your spouse live with you or contribute to your support?
7. Do you own a home?
8. Do you own a car?
9. Do you have any debts?
10. Do you have any loans?
11. Do you plan to get married?
12. Do you plan to have children?
13. What sort of birth control do you use?
14. Are you likely to quit if you get married or have children?
15. Is your spouse likely to be transferred?
16. Is your spouse from this area?
17. Would a white (or black) supervisor create any difficulties for you?
18. How do you feel about having to work with members of a different race?

19. Are you a militant?
20. Do you get along well with other women (or men)?
21. Will it bother you if others swear?
22. What language does your mother/father speak?
23. Were you born in this country?
24. Do you have people in the "old country"?
25. That's an unusual name-what nationality are you?
26. Can you provide a photograph of yourself?
27. How old are you?

VI. Concluding the Search

Once the decision has been reached who the best candidate is, and, hopefully, that individual accepts the offer, the tough job of finding the right person for the job is over. However, there are a few details that need to be completed before the search is closed.

Before a formal job offer is made, the hiring supervisor should first conduct a background check. With the applicant's permission, the supervisor should contact former employers and, at some point, the current employer, to secure information about the candidate. These references should be recorded in written form and forwarded to Human Resources if the person is hired. Negative references should also be forwarded to Human Resources and will be filed with the individual's application. A supervisor's failure to conduct reference checks could result in a negligent hiring claim if the individual who is eventually hired was guilty of some type of infraction or crime in their prior work history and commits that same infraction in the new position. For example, an individual terminated from a former job for assault is hired by the University and assaults a student. That student can sue the University for negligently hiring this individual if the University failed to conduct a background check and make an attempt to investigate the employee.

Listed below are some of the items that can be discussed in a background check:

1. Confirming the type of employment, employment dates, earnings.
2. Requesting feedback on performance such as work quality and quantity, ability to learn quickly, skills and abilities. What were these individual responsibilities? What were the biggest contributions the individual made to your organization?
3. Personal qualities - a team player?, cooperative?, interface with co-workers, customers, students?
4. Attendance - Did the individual arrive on time and observe lunch breaks? The Americans with Disabilities Act disallows questions pertaining to sick time but questions can be asked about dependability and reliability.
5. Would the employer consider rehiring the individual?
6. Why did this person leave your organization(s)?

A supervisor considering an internal applicant should contact that person's current or past supervisor for the purpose of seeking references or may review performance appraisals.

The next item pertains to the unsuccessful candidates. These are the individuals who were interviewed but for one reason or another, were not selected. Letters of rejection should be sent or, if the supervisor prefers, a phone call can be made, to inform the individuals they were not selected. Human Resources uses a standard letter to convey this message in a succinct, but empathic way. Often times, supervisors prefer to send their own letters. This is acceptable although Human Resources should review all letters before they are sent.

An offer letter should also be sent to the successful candidate (See attachment C). Such correspondence is a wonderful opportunity to welcome the individual to the University and serves as a written follow-up to what was orally agreed to. Supervisors should confirm the starting salary with Human Resources before the offer is extended.

Affirmative Action Reporting

The final ingredient necessary to conclude the recruiting process is the completion of the Affirmative Action log (Attachment D). The University is required to maintain an Affirmative Action Program, which is designed to accelerate the achievement of equal opportunity for women and for persons of color and to ensure equal opportunity in all aspects of employment. The hiring supervisor's role in this mission is to summarize, and report to Human Resources, the results of his/her search. This reporting is required for all positions.

Non-Exempt Positions

All applicants for a particular position should appear on the log, but there are some exceptions. For positions that are filled internally, i.e., within the University community, only the names of internal applicants should appear. There are some internal searches for which external candidates apply. These individuals need not appear on the log since there was no formal job announcement external to the University. In the event the hiring supervisor does entertain both internal and external candidates, all applicants should appear on the log.

Searches for non-exempt positions require the hiring supervisor to complete the log in its entirety. The front of the form requires the date the applicant applied, name, sex, whether the applicant is a member of a minority group (if this is known), the referral source, whether or not interviewed and if they were not interviewed, the reason why. Included as Attachment E is a list of reasons to be used.

The reverse side of the log is a section summarizing the recruiting activity. An important section to note is the "Apparent Composition of Field of Candidates." The hiring supervisor must provide a numerical breakdown of the sex and minority group status of all interviewees. The next section asks for the name of each interviewee, whether he/she was offered the position, whether he/she was hired, and most importantly, the reasons the unsuccessful candidates were not offered the position. Once again, the reasons in Attachment E should be used. Finally the hiring supervisor should sign and enter the date in the section "Search Chair." The completed log should then be sent to Human Resources, along with all resumes and/or applications generated by the search.

Exempt Positions

The Banner System's applicant tracking module provides a printed summary of applicants for professional searches. The hiring supervisor will still be asked to provide reasons why applicants weren't interviewed using the same list from Attachment D. Also the hiring supervisor must provide the minority status of each individual interviewed, if it is known, provide reasons why the unsuccessful interviewees weren't hired, sign and date the log and return it to Human Resources.

VII. Summary

This hiring guide has been designed to assist supervisors recruit and retain the best qualified person for the job. Additionally, it will provide assistance with the completion of various forms necessary to begin and conclude the recruiting process. Any questions related to employment and staffing should be directed to the Human Resources department. Feel free to contact Human Resources at any time for advice and direction before you begin a search.

Attachment B

Human Resources
Scranton, Pa 18510-4679
(570) 941-7767

REQUEST FOR CANDIDATE SEARCH
ADMINISTRATIVE/PROFESSIONAL
STAFF POSITIONS

Please Print or Type

Department: _____

Title of Position: _____

The position description is: new (or revised) and attached
 continued as previously written
 enclosed

Salary: Approved at minimum of \$ _____, maximum of \$ _____ or _____

Date position begins: _____

Advertising sources preferred: _____

Application deadline: _____

Screening will be done by (department or persons): _____

Screening will be completed by (date): _____

Please note that letters sent by Human Resources to all applicants will inform them that if they are not contacted within 7 days of this date, they are no longer being considered for this position.

Interview arrangements with candidates will be the responsibility of _____

Candidate selection will be by _____

Rejection letters will be prepared by _____

Human Resources will provide a sample of an offer letter that should be sent to the successful candidate by the hiring supervisor.

(Signature)

(Date)

ATTACHMENT C

Welcome Letter To the New Non-Exempt Employee (from the Supervisor)

[Today's Date]

[Employee's Name]
[Employee's Address]

Dear [Employee's Name]:

On behalf of our entire department, welcome to The University of Scranton. We are looking forward to your joining us as [job title] on [start date] at an hourly rate of [hourly rate]. To help you become more familiar with your new job, I've enclosed a current job description.

You can report to [location] at [time] on your first day of work. Sometime that morning, you will meet with a member of the Human Resources department to complete some required documents. Per federal requirements you will need to produce either: (1) a United States Passport; or (2) a drivers license and a birth certificate or a social security card. If you do not possess these documents, you can inquire about other options by contacting Human Resources at (570) 941-7767. In addition, you will need to provide the date(s) of birth and social security number(s) of any dependents and beneficiaries.

We require all new employees to have their payroll checks deposited directly into their checking or savings accounts, so please also bring a voided check or deposit ticket with the name of your bank, the transit/routing number and your individual account number.

When you arrive in our department, you will have the opportunity to meet your coworkers. I'll also assign you to a "buddy" who will serve as a guide and trainer during your orientation. Your "buddy" can be a helpful resource to answer a number of questions.

We are looking forward to your arrival.

Sincerely,

[Supervisor's Name]
[Supervisor's Title]

encl: job description

ATTACHMENT D

**Welcome Letter To New Exempt Employee
(from the Supervisor)**

[Today's Date]

[Employee's Name]
[Employee's Address]

Dear [Employee's Name]:

On behalf of our entire department, welcome to The University of Scranton. We are looking forward to your joining us as [job title] on [start date] at a bi-weekly salary of [salary] (_____ annualized).

A signed copy of this letter, returned to me, will indicate your acceptance. Please call me at (570) 941-_____ for any additional clarification.

You can report to [location] at [time] on your first day of work. Sometime that morning, you will meet with a member of the Human Resources department to complete some required documents. Per federal requirements, you will need to produce either: (1) a United States Passport; or (2) a drivers license and a birth certificate or a social security card. If you do not possess these documents, you can inquire about other options by contacting Human Resources at (570) 941-7767. In addition, you will need to provide date(s) of birth and social security number(s) of any dependants and beneficiaries.

We will inquire all new employees to have their payroll checks deposited directly into their checking or savings accounts, so please also bring a voided check or deposit ticket with the name of your bank, the transit/routing number and your individual account number.

When you arrive in our department, you will have the opportunity to meet your co-workers. I'll also assign you to a "buddy" who will serve as a guide and trainer during your orientation. Your "Buddy" can be a helpful resource to answer a number of questions.

We hope your decision is to join the University of Scranton community.

Sincerely,

John Doe, Manager
University of Scranton

Acceptance: _____
John Doe

C: Human Resources

ATTACHMENT E

SCT/BANNER HRM SYSTEM FOR NON-SELECTION OF STAFF

USE THE PREFIX:

- N = THOSE WHO DO NOT MAKE THE INTERVIEW STAGE**
- I = THOSE WHO REACH THE INTERVIEW STAGE**

- A - NOT ACADEMICALLY QUALIFIED**
(Does not meet minimum academic qualifications advertised.)

- B - WRONG DEGREE**
(Degree in a field not compatible with the needs of the department as advertised.)

- C - WRONG SPECIALIZATION**
(Area of specialization or interest overlaps significantly with those of current members of the department and hence does not fit with the needs of the department as advertised.)

- F - APPLICATION NOT COMPLETE**
(Failed to complete application process.)

- G - WITHDREW**
(Voluntarily withdrew.)

- H - WEAK QUALIFICATIONS**
(Not as strong as ones to be interviewed/hired.)

- I - INSTITUTIONAL FIT**
(Potential conflict of interest with campus interest and goals.)
Please provide additional information to substantiate this reason.

- J - REFERENCE QUALITY**
(Quality of references weak.)

- M - NOT INTERESTED**
(Interview revealed that this candidate was not interested in the assignment required by this position.)

- Q - DECLINED OFFER**
(Offered the position but declined.)

- R - POOR INTERVIEW**
(The overall interview was poor.)

- S - COMMUNICATION PROBLEM**
(Interview process demonstrated poor communication skills.)

- T - ERRATIC WORK HISTORY**
(Prior work experience indicates frequent job change.)

- U - OVERQUALIFIED**
(Candidate's background exceeds the needs of the Department.)

- HR - INTERVIEW HIRED**