

Interview Guidelines

Step 1. Identifying the skills and competencies/Key Criteria required for the job

This is the process of deciding what are the key skill areas necessary to complete the job, i.e. what kinds of skills should a candidate possess to be successful in the job.

Actions

- A useful mechanism is to list the behaviours displayed by people who may already be employed in the role and are extremely successful in that position.
- You will have a limited enough time during the interview so avoid creating a wish list and concentrate on identifying the KEY aspects of the job - the most important criteria. You should be looking at about 5/6 areas.
- Depending on the role you may also consult the external expert (if one has been appointed to the interview panel) for their views on essential requirements for the post.

Output

- A list of key competencies against which candidates will be reviewed and which may be included in the recruitment advertisement.

Step 2. Planning key questions/criteria

Your objective here is to create a list of questions for the interview, which will allow:

- the candidate display whether they have the required skills.
- you to gather sufficient information to consistently review candidates against each of the key criteria.

Actions:

- As time is limited in an interview, as a guide you need to identify in the region of 10-15 questions for an hour's interview.
- You should develop questions against the key criteria identified for the job.
- You should be looking at gathering a mix of:

Situational Questions – e.g. work related questions.

- Criterion Referenced questions – e.g. what have you done in the past.

Outputs

What you are looking for is a list of questions that will allow you to determine whether the candidate can provide evidence of these skills through examples of behaviours or can factually identify they have completed a course etc...or had specific experience etc

At the end of this document is a sample of questions against relevant criteria for the role of a County Administrator. Choose from the list the most relevant questions and rewrite them to suit your own interviewing style and add additional for other roles like a county development officer for example. You may wish to include other questions that you feel are more appropriate to the role.

Step 3. Marking scheme

You need to identify a maximum number of marks a candidate could achieve. A typical total would be 100 or 200. You should then decide prior to the interview the weighting each criteria should receive. The aim here is to allow differentiation among the candidates, for example if all the candidates (having gone through the short listing process) have more or less the same level of qualifications required for the role you should not assign a high score (a heavy weighting) on this criteria as it is likely that all of the candidates will receive the same mark, making it difficult to differentiate between them.

But if previous experience is a key requirement this criteria should receive a high weighting of marks.

The primary objective here is to make a valid assessment of the candidate.

Based on

- the identified criteria as essential for the job.
- Each candidate is assessed solely on the evidence provided:
 - Each panel member reaches agreement on the marking schemes.
 - The full range of available marking is utilised.
- Candidates should not be deemed unsuitable for recommendation for want of some particular qualification, knowledge or experience which is not either explicitly or by clear implication – specified as essential.

Key Points:

- Always write up the rationale behind each mark. It may be useful to consider the forms provided .

Step 4. The Interview

Introduction

The objective of having a few words of introduction is to provide an icebreaker for the candidate and to ensure all parties are aware of the structure of the interview.

Actions:

- Greet the candidate.
- Introduce each panel member.
- Outline the process - i.e. notes will be taken, how long the interview will take, that each person will be asking a set of questions but others may add additional questions.
- Comfort, check that the candidate is comfortable, has access to water etc.

- Describe the role – this is an opportunity to convey key messages about the role and the Association in general. Your objective is to describe the role and the Association in such a way as to make the candidate want to join you.
- Avoid over-promoting a role, be realistic about any specific demands that may be made of the candidate and the level of behaviour required. It is pointless if a candidate accepts a role as described at interview and on joining the Association finds it is very different. This can be one of the reasons for high turnover in organisations. Make sure their expectations are realistic.

Step 5. Recording information:

Interview

In recording information relating to the interview, particularly the overall summary of the candidate, you should ensure that:

- the assessment relates to the established criteria for the job.
- the reasons for recommending/not recommending the candidate are fully identified on the documentation supplied. (see the last pages for a sample of the documentation you might wish to use).
- The panel's decisions have not been influenced by any of the defined equality areas.
- All documentation has been completed and signed.

Equal Opportunities in Interviewing

The objective is to operate an equal opportunity policy within the organisation and remain in line with the Employment Equality Acts.

Discrimination can take two forms:

Direct:

This occurs when someone is treated less favourably than another on the grounds of sex, age, race, colour, religion, national/ethnic origin, disability, marital or family status, sexual orientation or membership of the travelling community.

Indirect:

Indirect discrimination occurs when a person is obliged to comply with a requirement that is not essential to the job but with which a higher proportion of people in another area are able to comply, for example a height restriction where height is not relevant for the job and the restriction is such that a greater proportion of men will meet the requirements.

It is essential that the interview and selection be conducted in a manner, which does not favour persons of one particular grouping.

Questions should refer only to the established requirements of the job. In assessing candidates interviewers should not imply discrimination by asking questions about personal or family circumstances, marriage plans etc.

This particular job requires flexibility in that candidates will be required to work weekends and to undertake a degree of travel. This should be stated when describing the job to **all** candidates and they should simply be asked is that acceptable to them – avoid the trap of assuming family circumstances may be more onerous for women to organise than men...

Recording information:

In recording information relating to the interview, particularly the overall summary of the candidate, the interviewer will ensure:

- that the assessment relates to the established criteria for the job.
- indicates reasons for recommending/not recommending the candidate.
- is not influenced by any of the defined equality areas.

Sample Questions

Draft Criteria Example for County Administrator

Some of the key criteria identified were:

- Good administrative skills
- Initiative/self motivated
- Planning and Organising
- Customer service – dealing with people, answering queries
- Attention to detail
- Approach to learning
- Teamwork
- Energy

The following are provided as a sample of questions against the key areas. As mentioned before, choose one or two questions from each and feel free to rewrite or amend. There are a lot of criteria so you may wish to reduce them or combine.

The key actions are provided to give you something to look out for when the candidate is answering the questions, e.g. the sort of areas they should be covering.

Direct Experience/Qualifications

Key Actions

- Do they have recent and active experience in (list areas in advertisement)?
- Where did this take place - industrial, government authority, academic, public, private sector etc?
- Confirm qualifications and seek results where necessary.

Proposed Questions

- Candidates should be asked to go through their c.v. briefly, providing a brief overview of the roles they have held.
- Probe for level of administrative skills/IT skills, what have they learned in each position.
- Clarify any areas that you might have highlighted on the c.v. e.g. gaps in service.
- Ask candidates to confirm they have successfully attained their qualifications as stated on the c.v.

Accuracy

Key Actions

- Follows procedures.
- Ensures high quality output.
- Working to deadlines.

Proposed questions

- When working on a repetitive task it can be easy to lose concentration and make mistakes. Has this happened to you in the past? How did/would you deal with it?
- Describe a process you carried out that required you to pay close attention to detail or follow set instructions. How successful were you?
- In order to complete certain tasks you may be required to get a number of people's co-operation. How have you achieved this in the past? What do you think the best approach may be?
- How do you deal with routine often repetitive tasks? How would you manage if they formed a large part of your role?

Customer Service

Key Actions

- Seeks to understand customers.
- Educates customers.
- Builds collaborative relationships.
- Takes action to meet customer needs and concerns.

Proposed Questions

- How do you define good customer service? How have you delivered good customer service in _____ what did you do?
- How do you establish good relationships with customers?
- Have you ever had to deal with a customer who had a problem? Tell me how you dealt with the situation.

Energy

Key Actions

- Maintains stamina
- Maintains effectiveness

Proposed Questions

- Tell me about a time you had to work at a fast pace for a long period of time. What kind of work did you do? What did you do to maintain that pace?
- Describe a time when you were particularly busy at work. What kind of hours did you do? How did the situation affect you?
- What job activities have you found require the most energy? What did you do to maintain your effectiveness?
- How would you deal with a situation where you may be very busy for a certain period of time? How would you keep motivated and effective?

Initiative/Self-Motivation

Key actions

- Looks for solutions themselves.
- Thinks expansively.

Proposed Questions

- How do you approach a situation where you are required to complete a task e.g. prepare a report, answer a query and there are no standard procedures available. What steps did you take?
- How will you approach getting up to speed in this role?
- Have you taken any steps to make your job easier or improve the way you deal with tasks. Give me an example.
- Tell me about a time when you had to solve a problem in work. How did you come up with the approach? Did you consider other options?

Learning

Key actions

- Actively participates in learning activities.
- Quickly gains knowledge, understanding or skill using a range of learning e.g. action learning, reading, formal training etc.

Proposed Questions

- What was the most difficult task you had to learn in your job at _____? How did you learn it?
- What did you have to learn to be effective at _____? How long did that take you? Which part took most time? Why?

Planning & Organising

Key Actions

- Prioritises.
- Determines tasks and resources.
- Schedules.
- Stays focused.

Proposed Questions

- Tell me about a time when you faced conflicting priorities. How do you ensure that all the requirements are met?
- What do you do when you are provided with a list of tasks/projects/objectives to complete?
- Describe how you manage your time and ensure your goals are achieved. What techniques do you use? What are the most successful?
- Tell me about a project or deliverable in work that for example had a very short deadline or a major impact on your organisation. How did it affect you? How did you react?
- We've all been in situations where we couldn't complete everything we needed on time. Tell me about a time when this happened to you. What did you do?

Teamwork/Sharing Information

Key Actions

- Committed to achieving team goals.
- Helps others achieve their goals.
- Involves others – listening and inclusive.
- Ensures information is shared.

Proposed Questions

- What do you think are the key characteristics of a good team member/player?
- What are some specific tasks you've completed that directly contributed to accomplishing a team goal?
- Describe how you interact with other team members. Give me an example where you have shared your views or knowledge with others.
- Interdepartmental co-operation involves giving and receiving. Tell me about a time when you collaborated with others.

Interview Overview Sheet
(summary of results from individual interview record sheets)

Competition: _____ Date: _____

Selection Criteria	Maximum Rating	Actual Ratings					
		Candidate 1	Candidate 2	Candidate 3	Candidate 4	Candidate 5	Candidate 6
TOTAL							

SIGNED: _____ SIGNED: _____ SIGNED: _____

Individual Interview Record Sheet

The selection decision involves measuring each candidate against the selection criteria defined prior to the interview, not against each other.

Competition: _____ Candidate Name: _____ Number: _____ Date: _____

Selection Criteria	Ratings		Comments
	Maximum rating	Actual Rating	
TOTAL			

SIGNED: _____ SIGNED: _____ SIGNED: _____