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Interview Etiquette

The purpose of a professional interview is to identify a person's experience, personality and work ethic.

Further exploration into culture fit and career motivation is also very important. Interviews can go terribly wrong when an interviewer decides to "freestyle" or "wing it". Familiarity with interview etiquette, employment law and preparing a few thought-out questions in advance will avoid many of the common pitfalls that can occur during an interview. Here is a short list of ideas to formulate good questions to ask, as well as what you may not or should not ask.

Good Questions

- What do you like most about your current position?
- Why are you thinking about making a job change?
- Tell us about a problem you faced at work, how did you solve it?
- Your greatest accomplishment with your current company?
- Give us an example of a time you used your creativity at work.
- What is your management style?
- How many people have you supervised in the past?
- What do you believe are your greatest professional strengths?
- What have you identified as your professional weakness?
- What about this position is exciting to you?
- How would your current employees or co-workers describe you?
- How would your clients or customers describe you?
- Tell us about a difficult decision you have had to make.

Good Questions (cont.)

- Tell us about a failure and what you learned in the process?
- What's one thing you would like to do better?
- What would you do if the board/management makes a decision you don't agree with?
- What makes a job enjoyable for you?

Do Not Ask

- How old are you?
- Where are you from originally?
- Are you married?
- Do you have children?
- Do you own a home?
- When do you plan to retire?
- What does your husband/wife do for a living?
- Do you have any health conditions?
- What medications do you take?
- What church do you go to?
- What religious holidays do you celebrate?
- Have you ever been arrested?
- Have you ever filed for Workers Compensation?
- Military discharge: honorable or dishonorable?
- Have you ever filed bankruptcy?
- Any questions about physical traits such as: hair color, skin color, weight, height etc.
- Have you ever been sexually harassed at work?

Take some time and review the list of **Good Questions** and use those ideas to formulate your own questions specific to the position you are looking to fill. You might even spend some time thinking through follow up questions based on the answer you receive. It is important to remember that an interview is a leadership opportunity, and you are the leader! How an interviewer leads an interview determines the success in hiring for a position.

The list of questions in the **Do Not Ask** column are questions you must not ask, and if you do, the interviewee does not have to answer. Additionally, you cannot decide not to hire them based on the answer or their refusal to answer. Every now and then, an applicant will volunteer information from the **Do Not Ask list**. Most people have the best of intentions when they share personal information in an interview. They want you to know that they are ready, willing and able to come do an outstanding job for you in a highly competitive job market.

If an applicant voluntarily discloses anything in the **Do Not Ask** column you should ignore it and move on to the next appropriate question. If they bring up personal and protected information again you should say "Thank you for being so open and transparent. We would like to focus our interview on your work experience." – Then ask another appropriate question. Be gracious but focused in your interview. Their ability to focus on their professional accomplishments demonstrates their own etiquette and willingness to follow your lead; this also demonstrates their willingness to collaborate and be a team player.