A guide

The Intricacies of Interviewing

A guide to conducting the perfect interview

Allen Associates

At the heart of any recruitment process is the interview stage. It's your time to meet with several carefully selected, high-quality candidates face-to-face, so you can find the right person for your business needs.

Prior to taking the decision to start the recruitment process, you will likely have established a business case to justify taking on a new employee. You'll have carefully weighed up the budgetary considerations, workloads of team members and used your due diligence to craft an extensive job description. You may think that the strategy part of your recruitment is over; after all, you've received a high volume of applications and its now time to start the first round of interviews. But in our experience, the interview stage can often be the hardest part of recruitment.

That's why we've taken the time to write this guide, which will give you an insight into how you can plan and manage your interview processes effectively. We've filled it with practical tips and advice on how you can ensure that you feel comfortable in your interviews and you can also use our printable checklist to help your internal preparations.

If you have any questions about how you can improve your interviewing techniques, then please get in touch with us and we'll be happy to advise you further.

When handled correctly, interviews can give you confidence that you're finding the right person for the job. But the process needs careful planning and management. They may only be two little words, but the phrase "You're Hired" is more than just a TV catchphrase; it's a statement that can have costly implications for those who get it wrong.

Managing the interview process in-house

The interview stage is the mid-point of the talent acquisition phase. You will have issued a job advert and job description and filtered your applications into a manageable pile of potential candidates.

Some companies may handle this manually – taking the time to read through each application individually and deciding if they have the right fit for the job. They spend hours of time contacting each individual applicant to arrange a convenient interview time and location. It goes without saying that this is a lengthy process and takes up time which could be used more effectively on other pressing tasks.

Other organisations have sped up their recruitment strategies using Applicant Tracking Software such as Cezanne HR, Workable or Zoho Recruit. These ATS systems allow companies to post job descriptions automatically on various job boards and use automation and AI technologies to filter applications. Typically using specified keyword searches, the configured software will automatically decide which applicants should be interviewed and will schedule interviews on your behalf as well as alert unlucky candidates that their application was unsuccessful.

Making the most of expert experience

Whilst there are clear advantages to managing job applications in-house, there are also extensive advantages from working with an external specialist recruitment team such as Allen Associates.

A recruitment agency will work closely with clients to establish exactly what role is needed and make suggestions as to what skills and attributes may be required to do the job effectively. They'll be able to actively promote the job role to a far wider pool of candidates (including those who are not actively seeking a new challenge) and they will be the 'go-to' point of contact, therefore freeing up valuable in-house resources.

As dedicated recruiters, we know that we play a hugely important role in successful recruitment strategies. We go beyond just matching skills and jobs; we act as a 'middle-man' to help both clients and candidates set expectations (in terms of culture fit, salary, job specifics) and we can also help to eradicate unconscious bias from your recruitment plans. We can supply blind CV's which can not only help to improve your diversity, but they can be an important tool in eradicating pay gaps from forming.

We pre-screen all candidates so you only see those who could be an asset to your company. We also schedule the interview process on your behalf, check references and even negotiate salary and remuneration packages for you. The result is a confident new team member who knows exactly what to expect the moment that they walk through the door.

Let's get started – how many candidates should I be interviewing?

There's no right or wrong answer here. Some employers may find that they want to interview a wide range of people – after all, the more people you see, the better chance of finding the right person. But interviews are lengthy and take considerable time away from your regular duties so seeing as many people as possible can be counter-productive.

As a rule, our experience shows that **'most clients tend to interview between 3-5 people at first, which may narrow down further to 1-2 people if you choose to implement a second interview.'**

If you're receiving many applications, then you may need to qualify the applicants more stringently.

If you know that a specific skill or qualification is a 'must' rather than a 'nice to have' then make sure it's clear on the initial job description. If your description is clear and comprehensive, you should be interviewing a similar group of people which will allow you to make a clearer decision. In our experience, if you're interviewing people with different skill sets, you'll find it harder to know exactly what you're looking for, and who the best person for the job may be.

Do you know what type of interview you will be conducting?

If you know who you would like to meet in person and dates/times are scheduled for both the candidate and the hiring panel, its time to turn your attention to the type of interview that you want to conduct.

There are many different types of interviews, and each style has its own merits. You may find that a traditional interview between one person and a candidate may suffice (especially for a straightforward administrative role) but for job roles that require greater levels of creativity (perhaps a marketing or PR role), you may wish to think outside of the box. Something as simple as asking an offbeat question can allow you to discover more about a candidate's personality and thinking process.

For instance, in an interview Apple famously asked one candidate:

'If you were a pizza delivery man, how would you benefit from scissors?'
(Source: Glassdoor)

In our experience, the growth of technology has changed the ways that interviews take place. These days, telephone or video interviews are commonplace because they allow a wider geographical net of candidates, as well as making it easier for senior management teams and C-Suite executives to marry up their diaries and join in.

According to Monster, telephone interviews can also be used to pre-screen candidates if an HR manager has any questions about an applicant's CV prior to the formal interview stage.

Monster has also broken down the different types of interview commonly found. Once you've decided what style of interview is right for your business, you can start to prepare in full.

Different types of Interview and their benefits:

Competency interviews
These are designed to test if the candidate has the right ability and experience for the job.

Behavioural interview
If the candidate is less experienced, behavioural interviews allow for hypothetical situations to be put to candidates. It allows you to see their lateral thinking and decision making processes.

Technical interview
This is where you incorporate a test into the interview so you can judge their capability. It's important to ensure that every candidate receives the same test under the same conditions.

Panel interview
This involves a panel of hiring managers who may ask candidates to put forward a presentation. These can be lengthy and time consuming for both candidates and clients.

Group interviews
Although slightly out of fashion, they can be used to interview a lot of candidates at once. It allows clients to see how individuals work as part of a team and how they react to pressure.

Source: Monster

If you need any help or guidance in confirming what type of interview you should be using for your job vacancy, please speak to your Allen Associates consultant.

If preparation is key, do you know what you're looking for?

"He who is best prepared can best serve his moment of inspiration."
Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Much is written online about how important it is for a candidate to prepare themselves for an interview, but the same is true for employers. We know that your time is valuable and that you need the recruitment process to be as swift as possible. Therefore, taking the time to prepare and refine your interview processes can help you to save valuable time (and money) later down the line.

Prior to the interview taking place, you should sit with each member of the hiring panel and establish what you are looking for. Are you looking for someone with specific qualifications and skills, or are you looking for someone slightly less experienced but more adaptable to your way of working? Are there any specific attributes that could be a requirement of the job role? For instance, if you're looking to hire a marketing candidate, will they need specific design experience? Or if it's for an HR role, do they need to have experience in SAP/CRM?

At this stage, you can start to prepare your interview questions. Broadly speaking, most interviews follow a structured interview pattern. It starts with information about the company and the job role, then it moves to questions about experience and career history before concluding with a chance for the candidate to ask questions.
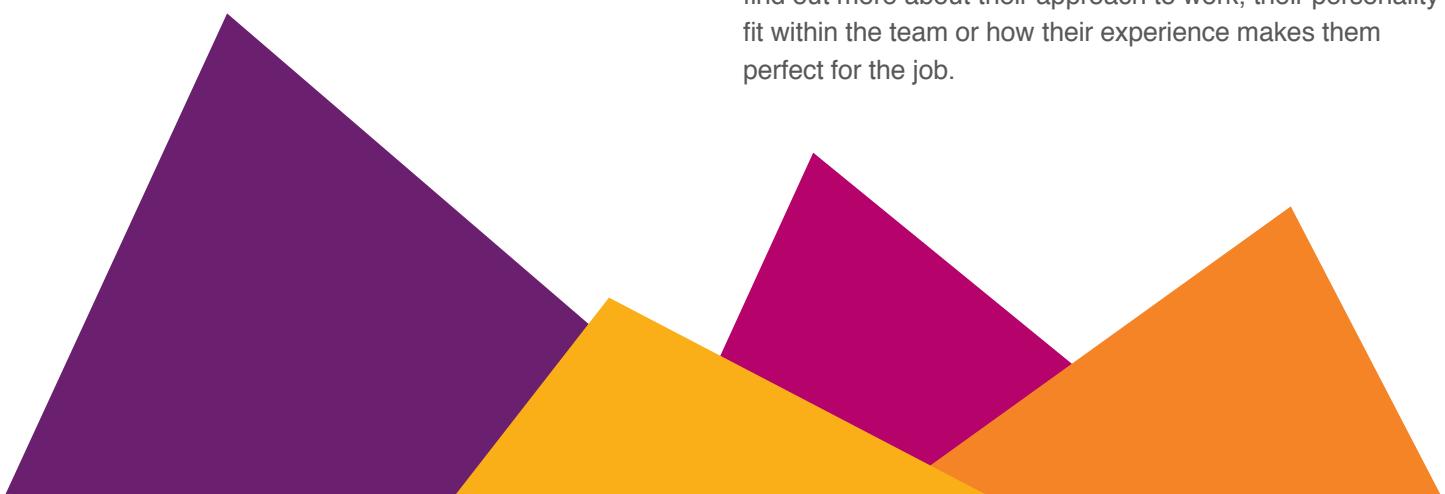
"Structured interviews are better predictors of job performance, more legally defensible and better for record-keeping. During structured interviews, you ask the same questions to all candidates in a specific order and score them with a predetermined rating scale. Your Applicant Tracking System may have built-in checklists or interview scorecards to help you rate candidates this way."
Workable

You may decide to use a framework for your questions. This allows you to pre-prepare what you want to ask, and it ensures consistency for each candidate because they will each be asked a similar thing. However, whilst the bulk of the interview should be focused upon the specific job role, you also need to ensure that questions are relevant to that applicant's personal CV and career history.

When you look at a CV prior to an interview you should be analytical. Does it highlight that person's skills and experience? Are you clear on what duties they've been responsible for? Is there anything that raises any red flags – perhaps a gap in career history or is there anything you need to check the validity of? If you have any questions about their CV, then make sure you note it down and include it within your interview question framework.

We always recommend cross-referencing your interview questions with the applicant's CV – you don't want to waste precious time asking them about something which the candidate has already shared. You want to use the time to find out more about their approach to work, their personality fit within the team or how their experience makes them perfect for the job.

Do you know how to tell fact from fiction?

It's an unfortunate fact of life that people will lie on their CVs if they think it will get them through the door. But whilst some white lies are harmless (such as claiming to do volunteer work on the weekends), others can be hazardous to a business if it turns out that the candidate is unqualified to do the job correctly.

When you review a CV, it's important to do your due diligence. In today's technological world, it's never been easier to check the immediate red flags. A quick search on LinkedIn or a browse at a candidate's' Twitter page or Instagram feed can tell you a lot about a person.

There have been numerous studies that have explored how many people lie on a CV. In 2018, CV-Library commissioned a survey which found that a staggering 92.5% of Brits have got away with lying on a CV!

Despite so many professionals confessing to lying on their CV, 90.5% of workers do think it's wrong to do so. That said, 69.5% think that professionals are forced to twist the truth because employers expect too much of them.

Furthermore, when asked to identify the top reasons for these lies, workers said that people lie on their CV: to look more experienced (63.8%), appear more qualified (54.8%), to gain a higher salary (41.2%) and to look more skilled (31.5%).
Source: CV-Library

So how can you tell fact from fiction? There are a couple of things that you should keep an eye out for.

Firstly, check job titles and dates to see if they coincide. If it's a candidate that only graduated recently yet has senior job titles on his CV, something doesn't add up. It may be perfectly justified yet it's worth questioning them during any

potential interview. Similarly, if the person's submitted CV is entirely different from what is written on their LinkedIn profile, then it's also worth flagging up as a potential myth.

Secondly, when reading the candidate's CV, use an analytical mind to see how vague they are about certain achievements. If they have genuinely undertaken the work, they should be able to provide you with tangible metrics to justify their success. If it's only mentioned in a vague passing way, it could be difficult to spot the context behind the achievement. For example – they may say that they increased a social media profile by 200% but without any tangible metrics, this could be meaningless. Did they convert it from 100 followers to 300? Or was it 1 million to 3 million? What did they do to achieve this and in what time frame? Understanding the context can play a big part here, so it's important to pay close attention to what is said on the CV.

Interview questions – can you find the answers that you're looking for?

It goes without saying that you can only find the right answers if you've asked the right questions.

You will want to incorporate a mix of interview questions so you can test both technical expertise as well as situational awareness. This will allow you to understand their general approach. Applicant Tracking Software provider Workable suggests that you should group your interview questions into five key areas; general questions, technical skills questions, behavioural questions, situational questions, and managerial questions.

Interviewers who don't prepare their questions beforehand are missing out on the chance to evaluate candidates effectively. To decide what you're going to ask, first use the job description to determine which skills are most important and should be assessed during the interview. Then, build your questions around those skills.
(Source: Workable)

To help you understand the difference between each style of question, below are some examples of questions to help you get started.

General Questions

These are used to find out more about the person and their general background.

Sample questions
- What made you decide to choose [profession] as a career?
- What is your ideal working environment?

Technical skills

These will allow you to explore the person's aptitude for the job. These questions should be job-specific and help you to decide if they can do the job.

Sample Questions
- How has your work experience and training prepared you for this position?
- Are there are processes or programs you helped to introduce in your last company? Describe how this was implemented and how effective it was.

Behavioural Questions

This will allow you to understand more about an applicant's background and how they react to certain situations. They are particularly beneficial for high-pressured/fast-paced environments.

Sample Questions
- Tell me about a time when you handled a challenging situation
- Have you ever been assigned a project that you didn't know how to cope with?

Sample Question – Situational

Based on hypothetical scenarios, situational questions allow you to question candidates on "what ifs". The answers will give you an insight into their lateral thinking and how they would potentially manage situations

Sample questions
- If you discovered an unhappy customer had criticised you on social media how would you deal with it?
- How would you react if you found that staff members had accessed confidential information?

Sample Question – Managerial

For senior positions, you may want to incorporate some managerial questions to understand an applicant's leadership style.

Sample questions
- How would you describe your leadership style?
- How do you delegate tasks and what processes do you have in place to ensure that work gets done?

Interview questions – do you know what NOT to say?

In today's litigious world, it goes without saying that many interviews feature HR professionals. This isn't just to speed up the onboarding process, it's to ensure that the interview doesn't branch off into tricky conversations. A simple question about age or comment about being family matters could lead to difficulty and open you up to accusations of discrimination.

It is possible to find out pertinent information without directly asking by simply rephrasing your questions.

For instance, questions about the place of birth or ethnicity should never be directly asked. However, if there are elements that could aid their job ability then you could ask questions such as "are you fluent in any other languages" or "are you eligible to work in the UK?".

Similarly, it does without saying that you should never ask female candidates questions about family planning, marital status or childcare availability. Not only could they open you up to discrimination claims, but they simply aren't relevant to the candidate's ability to do the job. Instead, you could find out information by asking questions such as "are you able to travel or work overtime at short notice on occasion?" or "do you have any qualifications or references under another name?".

The official government website has clear advice for employers on how to prevent discrimination during recruitment. We would highly recommend that to err on the side of caution, all members of the interviewing panel should remind themselves of this guidance prior to entering an interview room.

At Allen Associates, we can work with our clients to help establish comprehensive interview questions if required.

Interview questions – do you know how to evaluate the answers?

When it comes to interviews you may think that you have a good memory, but after interviewing 4-5 candidates in a row, you may start to forget who said what. It's important to make notes during the interview which will allow you to

refresh your memory, but make sure your notes relate to your thoughts and are specific to individual applicants. Do they seem confident and able? Do you think they would mesh well with other members of the team? Are there any areas where you think they could have expanded upon their answers?

Part of your interview preparation should incorporate your evaluation strategies. You need to establish a way to compare each candidate fairly and equally. Some organisations choose to attribute a scorecard analysis whilst others rely on gut instinct.

The **STAR** (Situation – Task – Action – Result) framework is a popular assessment method used by both clients and candidates because it's simple to follow. You may notice that many candidates naturally include **STAR** in their responses, particularly for behavioural questions. It allows them to provide a comprehensive answer. If you know that you want to use **STAR** as an evaluative tool, you may wish to build it into your question framework.

Situation - Describe the context behind the situation

Task - What was your responsibility within that situation?

Action - How did you meet the task or approach the challenge?

Result - What were the outcomes or results from the outcome of the situation? What did you accomplish/learn?

Of course, your evaluation shouldn't just focus on the STAR framework. You should also be actively listening to what they are saying (and what they may not be saying). You may wish to consider how the candidate is answering the question.

Are they being candid or are they holding something back? Have they answered the specific question thoroughly? Have they been able to provide examples of when they've achieved something which is specific to the role?

Once you've considered these aspects you can start to consider if they are the best person for the job.

Will you be asking your candidate to undertake a specific task?

It is quite common for employers to ask candidates to complete tasks or assessments to enable them to understand more about their working capabilities. For example, when it comes to PR roles, it's entirely normal to ask a candidate to write a sample press release to test their writing skills.

Tests and assessments can be a good way of finding out more about candidates as well as to see if they are a good fit. They can be particularly beneficial for those who may not shine brightly in an interview scenario – perhaps as a result of nerves. However, any task or assessment should only be conducted within the interview room and shouldn't be too technically demanding. It should also be noted that any task shouldn't take advantage of the candidate's intellectual property.

You may also need to consider resourcing – not only will tasks take longer to conduct, they may involve you providing access to resources such as laptops and providing access to your internal systems. In a post-GDPR world, you should consider what documents candidates may accidentally have access to, and work in partnership with your IT departments to ensure stringent security checks.

There are a variety of different tasks and initiatives that you may like to incorporate into your interview processes. Each task is different and will showcase a different skill such as communication, leadership, competency and the ability to react under pressure - all of which are difficult to ascertain from CVs and interview questions. University website Prospects has a good breakdown of the common types of tasks regularly asked by employers.

Different types of Interview and their benefits:

Presentations
These usually last 10-20 minutes and the candidate is provided with details prior to the interview. Employers can use these to look for timing skills, public speaking, creativity, and understanding of the topic.

In Tray exercises
These tasks are designed to test workload capability. Simulating a realistic scenario, these hypothetical tests will simulate a range of paperwork to see if the candidate can identify priorities and handle large workloads.

Case study interviews
This style of test provides a candidate with a scenario in which they must report (verbally or written) how they are likely to respond/ react. For marketing or PR roles, it could be the simulation of a crisis management response.

Written tests
These are simple and efficient. It could be checking to see how someone would write an email, a document or a press release. They are used to test grammatical knowledge/ spelling but also to check industry knowledge and the ability to work quickly under pressure.

Source: Prospects

Should you let your candidate know about a task in advance?

In our view, it is courteous to let a candidate know what to expect from an interview. Not only so that they can prepare themselves for what they may be asked to do, but so that they can take practical considerations into account such as adequate car parking or childcare arrangements. If the applicant knows what to expect, they can work to the best of their ability rather than being flustered and/or unsure of what they should be doing.

Our role as recruiters is to ensure that both the client and the candidate feel comfortable. When we work with clients who will likely incorporate a task into their decision-making processes, we know that they are inevitably more success when the candidate has been fully briefed and aware of what to expect.

What is the difference between a first and second interview?

If a first interview is to build a first impression, a second interview gives the opportunity to cement that impression of that candidate in your mind.

If you've decided to go down the second interview route, then you will likely have been initially impressed by the candidate but still, require further information before making that all-important decision. They are typically used to cement that person's ability to do the job, so questions will focus upon more technical and competency questions rather than generic recruitment questions.
You may like to use tasks and assessments within the second interview stage, particularly if you have two candidates who are equally qualified.

At this stage, your questions should be focusing more on aspects that you may have missed during the first interview. Common second interview questions include:

- What are your long-term career goals?
- What are the main attributes that you have that you think is right for this role?
- What would you change about what we are doing now?

It's also a good opportunity to find out from the candidate what their salary expectations are, and what their notice period may be.

Who should be involved in the interview room?

Interview panels vary in size. For some positions, it may be conducted by a direct line manager, whilst others may involve senior colleagues, those from other departments and HR representatives.
The decision of who to involve in the interview process is up to you and there are positives and negatives to large and small panels.

According to PeopleHR, "Ideally, you'll want three or four people on your hiring committee." They suggest appointing a "chairperson" who can make the final decision, particularly when it is a close contest between candidates. However, when it comes to group decisions, it's important that each member of the hiring panel uses the same scoring system to judge each applicant. To ensure consistency, this should be factored into your pre-interview preparation plan.

When it comes to interviewing teams, Workable goes one stage further. They suggest that:

If you're conducting panel interviews, determine who will ask which question and in what order. Also, it's good to know who will answer questions about which topic. For example, the hiring manager will be more suitable to talk about pay or the team's direction, while team members can talk about culture and what they like about the team.
Source: Workable

The inclusion of multiple members of the team during the interview can be hugely beneficial. As well as having the direct line manager in the room, it can also be helpful to have a junior member of the team alongside an HR representative. Having a variety of experience means that different members of the panel will look for different attributes. A line manager may be looking at someone with the technical skills required, whilst a subordinate may be looking for someone with the potential to guide/mentor junior members as well as someone who will fit in with the team ethos.

Research has even shown that interviews conducted by more than one person make a difference to the odds of selecting the right candidate. It's not just about having someone to give a second opinion; it's about increasing awareness of unconscious bias.

In 2016, the Behavioural Insights Team conducted a simple study based upon a hypothetical interview. They asked 400 candidates to independently rate an interview response from four fictitious candidates to a generic recruitment question. By asking a large pool of people, they were able to easily identify the 'best' response. But the study wasn't about examining whether 400 people could come to the same conclusion; it was about identifying at which point a group could find the right candidate.

The results were clear:

"Data showed that in cases where candidates were very similar to each other, one interviewer made the best choice 49 percent of the time, but having three interviewers increased the odds of selecting the right person for the job to 63 percent and having seven interviewers increased the odds to a whopping 72 percent."
(Source: Kate Glazebrook, Principal advisor at the Behavioural Insights Team, AbelHR)

So, if we know that a group of interviewers are best, how can we ensure that they work together effectively? We've already mentioned that your pre-interview preparation plan should factor in a consistent scoring system, but it's also important that each individual interviewer has an opportunity to come to his/her own decision before sharing their thoughts with the group. It can be tempting to jump straight into a group discussion, but this can lead to opinions being formed or influenced by others.

How can you separate the strong from the weak?

Job interviews are extremely stressful for candidates. It is common for a perfectly competent candidate to fall apart because of nerves whilst an underqualified candidate may be viewed favourably because of their confident demeanour. So how do you spot the signs of confidence amongst candidates?

Earlier this year, Grosvenor Casino's conducted an in-depth study to see if they could establish the micro-expressions people use when they are playing games such as Blackjack and Poker. Through their Game Face campaign, they were not only able to detect the signs of insecurity, but they were also able to determine which facets indicate high levels of confidence. For interviewers, it's vital to be aware of these signs to ensure that you're making the right decision for the long-term benefit of your business.

Signs of Insecurity

Size & Space
When we're insecure, all we want to do is hide away from the world. By making ourselves smaller, we draw less attention to ourselves.

Lowered Head
This is a classic sign of negative baggage in our lives weighing us down. By lowering the head, we make ourselves smaller, with little eye contact. It shows an unwillingness to engage.

Hands Clasped
The higher the hands, the higher the stress barrier used to instinctively protect our heart and lungs. Crossed arms or clenched fists hidden under armpits are signs of stress.

Jiggling
Fidgeting feet and legs are a classic sign of insecurity, demonstrating we want to get up and run away from the situation. They are also the furthest body part away from our brain, so are less easily controlled than our faces which we know people are looking at to gauge our emotions.

Signs of Confidence

Posture
Posture is the first thing people see. Slouching or upright, your posture gives everyone around you an insight as to how you're feeling at that precise moment.

Head position
Head position gives away both negative and positive emotions. Confident people will mostly hold their head horizontally level or raise it slightly upward. Those lacking confidence will often stoop their posture and lower their head.

Eye contact
Eye contact is a crucial indicator of confidence. Confident people have no problem looking someone in the eyes when they're speaking, and they tend to hold their gaze much more when they are listening.

Stance and walk
The stance and walk of someone filled with confidence has a slightly wider gait than that of introverted, shy people, as if those who are confident aren't afraid to stride through life!

Breathing
Confident people tend to have smoother breathing. They take long breaths that fill the lungs with air, which makes sense, as the more oxygen you get to your brain, the better you feel.

Do you know when to broach the tricky subject of salary negotiations?

A reluctance to talk about money is a very British mannerism – after all, it's often deemed to be 'uncouth' to talk about such things. But if you are an interviewer then you will need to bite the bullet and discuss financial matters with potential applicants.

For today's workers, salary is more than just a financial figure. The millennial generation is looking for comprehensive remuneration packages. As well as competitive salaries and bonus structures, they want the opportunity for continual career progression, flexible working hours, a positive work-life balance, as well as perks such as health insurance and gym memberships. If they feel that they aren't going to get that where they are, they are more than happy to move elsewhere until they find it. A 2019 survey from career platform The Muse suggested that 58% of young workers would move to a new job specifically for learning and growth opportunities and better work-life balance.

When it comes to setting salary expectations, the first consideration is whether you are going to include financial figures within the job advertisement. Some organisations find that adding a salary bracket to a job advert can help to bolster applications, but in contrast, it may cause issues where candidates believe that they should be nearer the high-end of the salary range. Similarly, if the company isn't open amongst its employees about its pay brackets, then existing employees may feel upset if they see a seemingly-similar job role advertised for a higher salary.

When it comes to recruitment, the complex issue of salary is an area where an experienced recruiter is worth every penny. Teams such as Allen Associates can work alongside both client and candidate to set expectations and liaise with both parties to negotiate favourable terms. By having an understanding from both sides prior to an interview, the recruitment team can help smooth the process so that each side feels happy and secure with the financial package.

However, if you aren't working with an external team then we highly recommend researching typical salaries for comparable roles to ensure that you're offering the right package. If the salary wasn't mentioned within the job description, then we would recommend including a salary bracket within the confirmation letter inviting them to attend an interview. We believe that if a candidate is going to give

up their time to prepare for an interview, they should know what to expect. If the amount is different from what they may be looking for, it saves valuable time for both client and candidate.

"I'm a firm believer you should ask about salary upfront. In fact, I've almost always asked about the salary and benefits package before the first interview.

I don't want to waste a company's time with the interview process if their salary isn't in the ballpark of what I'm looking for. More importantly, I don't want to waste my time either."
Source: Amy Morin, Forbes

Can you choose between two seemingly-perfect candidates?

In some situations, you may find yourself torn by two different candidates who are both perfectly capable of getting on with the task at hand. Your interview panel or second interview scenario may provide you with greater clarity but sometimes it's beneficial to contrast the immediate vs long term priorities for the business.

For instance, would one person be perfectly able to get on with the job or would they need additional training to cope with a changing role? In professions such as HR and Marketing where big data is increasingly important, can the candidate cope with the forthcoming analytical skills required for the role?

Perhaps one candidate matches the skills requirements perfectly, but another would fit in with the culture and ethos of the organisation. You may wish to consider the long term possibilities – rather than risk losing an excellent candidate, is there any feasible way that you could hire both candidates and create a new job role specifically for them?

Should you provide post-interview feedback?

In some situations, you may find that an unsuccessful applicant requests feedback on their interview performance. They may be looking for constructive feedback to help them in future interviews, in which case it would be generous for you to take your time to aid them. It may take some additional time for the hiring panel to gather their thoughts, but in a world where reputation is everything, it could enable the applicant to view you favourably even if they were ultimately unsuccessful.

"If your recruitment process is robust, it should be straightforward to offer honest, constructive feedback – the interview notes should contain information that you can pass on. Keeping good notes is essential (remember candidates can put in a subject access request for personal data that you hold on them, and this can include interview notes)"

Source: PeopleHR

If you are making notes during an interview scenario, then PeopleHR points out that these notes will be classed as a form of personal data and as such, will be subject to the GDPR regulations. If your organisation uses an ATS or HR software, you will be confident that there will be security procedures in place to maintain confidentiality. If, however, you were writing notes in your regular notebook, you must pay due care and attention to ensure that you do not accidentally breach the regulations.

Your personal interview checklist

To help you as you progress your recruitment activities, we've established a printable checklist that will help you as you prepare your pre-interview plan.

Please use this as a guide to help you navigate the interview stages of your talent acquisition strategies.

Phase 1: Prior to publicising job advert
- Prepare a business case for the recruitment of a new employee
- Draft a comprehensive job description
- Ask each team member for their input into the job description –they may have different insights into what skills/attributes are required
- Confirm how you will handle the application process

Phase 2: During the application period
- Publicise job opportunity through preferred channels / liaise with the recruitment agency
- Confirm what style of interview you will use to test the candidate's capabilities
- Confirm test/assessment process (if required)
- Liaise with IT department to ensure security/GDPR compliance during interview assessments
- Review CVs – check for initial capability against the job description
- Invite candidates to interview
- Draft interview confirmation letter
    - *Date*
    - *Time*
    - *Length of Interview*
    - *Notification of any expected tests/assessments*
    - *Job description*
    - *Confirmation of salary bracket*
    - *Miscellaneous details (e.g. nearest car park/bus stop)*

Phase 3: Pre-interview preparation

- Confirm who will be within the interview panel
- Appoint a chairperson if selecting a group interview
- Collaborate with each member of the interviewing panel to determine the scoring matrix
- Collaborate with each member of the interviewing panel to determine preferred skills/attributes for the role
- Establish predetermined interview questions based upon required skills/attributes
  - *General interview questions*
  - *Technical skills questions*
  - *Behavioural questions*
  - *Situational questions*
  - *Managerial questions*
- Review CVs – check if any there are any aspects which may require questioning
  - *Career gaps*
  - *Employment dates*
  - *Job titles*
  - *Achievements/Impact*
  - *Qualifications*
  - *Key skills*
  - *Personal statement*
- Review CVs – cross-reference each applicant against interview questions to ensure no duplication
- Check pre-prepared interview questions with a dedicated HR representative
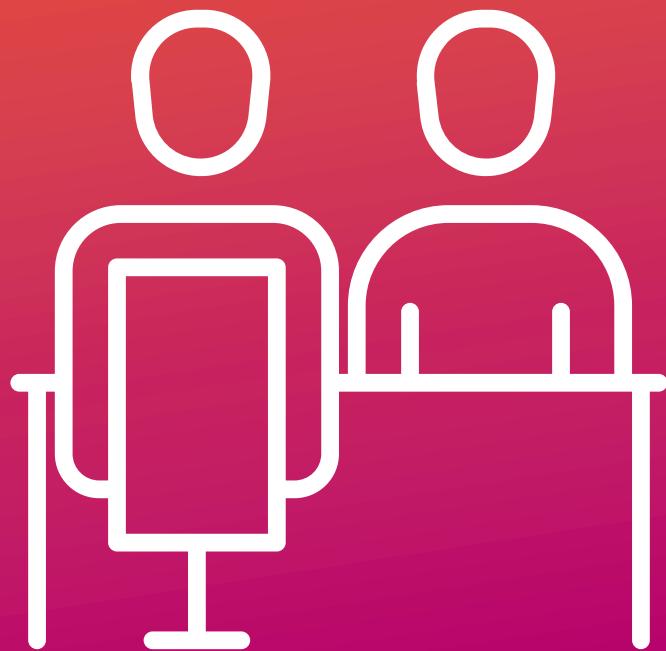
Phase 4: Interview day

- Remind all interviewing panel to read discrimination guidance published on gov.uk
- Provide writing paper/pens in the interview room for the panel to make notes
- Liaise with IT department to ensure that the interview room is set up for any technical requirements e.g. laptops

Phase 5: Post-interview

- Allow each interviewer to focus their thoughts and opinions

Group discussion about the candidate

- Submit all written notes to HR representative - enabling them to input into the preferred system, therefore adhering to GDPR
- Provide post-interview feedback to unsuccessful applicants

If you would like any further advice or guidance on how you should be planning your interview strategies, then please get in touch.

At Allen Associates, our dedicated team can take a confidential look at your preparation plans and help you to make the most of your interviews allowing you to feel confident that you're making the best hiring decision.

To talk to a member of our team, click here for more information or contact us on:

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