



Potentials Realized

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## **Interviewing Tips for Employers: Getting the Right People on the Bus**

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Employers and managers are often thrust into the spotlight when asked to lead an interview process for their organization, with little training or guidance. Getting the right person on board to your organization, in the right position, at the right time, is one of the most strategic business decisions today.

The cost to an employer for a position's turnover can be the equivalent of a year and a half of salary. This takes into account recruitment costs, lost productivity, training and other on-boarding expenses. As a result, it is important to get the right fit for the position the first time.

Keep in mind the following tips when you approach your next interviewing process – these ideas could literally save you thousands of dollars:

### **1. Give thought to the interviewing process and develop a consistent process for all candidates :**

In order to ensure the best "fit" for your organization, make sure that each candidate is being measured the same way. What this means practically, is that every candidate should be asked the same questions, and should go through the exact same steps. This is important not just for selection, but also to ensure consistency, which could be challenged in the legal environment.

### **2. Be aware of legislation:**

Every country has different legislation which will impact the interviewing process. Here in Canada, employers need to be aware of the impact of the Canadian Human Rights Codes and questions that may be prohibited under it. Not being aware of the legislative framework you are operating within can be a very costly mistake. Ensure that all staff involved in the selection process (from recruitment advertising, to the application, interview and selection process) are aware of any prohibited grounds.

### **3. What really are the KSAs (the Knowledge, Skills and Abilities) you need to hire for?**

KSA stands for knowledge, skills and abilities. When putting together a job description and the recruitment process focus in on the KSAs required for that position. Knowledge includes the technical knowledge and information a candidate needs to have in order to perform the job (for example, knowledge of marketing principles) . Skills are the hard and soft skills required to perform a position (for example, keyboarding or multi-lingual). Abilities are demonstrated observable competencies (for example, the ability to thrive in stressful environments, or to meet tight deadlines).

In HR we talk a lot about KSAs and job specifications for good reason. How many times have you attended an interview when the questions and the interviewing process really didn't look at what was required for the position? In addition to legal issues, it is important to really hone in on the KSAs required for any post. The KSAs will play an important role in your recruitment, selection, compensation, performance management (appraisal), and training and development processes.

#### **4. Group Decisions are better than Individual Decisions:**

It is more and more common today, and is a best practice, to hold panel interviews. Panel interviews involve two or more interviewers speaking with each candidate. Research continues to show that group decisions are better than individual decisions for many reasons including the fact that our own personal biases do not play as dominant a role.

When holding a panel interview process, ensure that all panel members are briefed on the process, the position you are hiring for, as well as best practices of interviewing. It is often helpful to build time at the start of the interviewing schedule for a 15-30 minute meeting between the members of the panel at the start of the interviewing process to discuss what it will look like -- who will ask the questions, when and how. An interviewing kit can be developed for panel members a week or so before the interview, giving them some time to review it prior to the interviews. The interviewing kit can include the resumes of the shortlisted candidates, the interview questions, interview scoring information and any other information.

#### **5. Block time in between candidates:**

Block time in between candidates for interviewers to complete their notes, and also to synthesize the group's feedback or recommendations. If you are holding 6-8 hours of interviewing back to back, it is natural to have each candidate start to look like each other. By blocking time in between interviews you can summarize your findings and then move on, returning to your summaries for each candidate at the end of the day or the end of the interview process.

When undertaking a panel interview, make sure that all panelists are comfortable and knowledgeable about the process and measurement (for example, if you are using any sort of matrix to measure). Also ensure that all panelists are on the same page (for example, that one rating of 5 is consistent with what others rating of 5 looks like). It can be helpful to provide some specific examples of what behavior would be considered a 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5 (if using a 5 point scale).

#### **6. Avoid closed questions:**

Wherever possible, avoid the use of closed questions, as well as leading questions. Closed questions are those questions when used would elicit a yes/no response. For example, "Have you had supervisory experience before?". Look to rephrase this to "Please describe your previous supervisory experience" or better yet "What are the lessons you have learned from your previous supervisory experience?". Notice how the second question gets even deeper than the first?

#### **7. Be clear on next steps:**

A common pitfall with interviewing is a lack of clarity regarding the next steps for the process. Will there be a second interview? When can the candidate expect to hear from the panel? Be as specific as possible regarding when the candidate can expect to hear back from the company. Remember, impressions are everything, and

interviews can be a public relations opportunity. Even if the candidate is not chosen, what message are you sending by the communication you are sending on next steps?

### **8. Interviews are a two way process:**

Remember that interviews are the chance for you to check out the candidate and for the candidate to check out your company. Often strong candidates may leave an interview realizing that they do not want to work for the company they have just interviewed with. What is the image of the company you are portraying through the interview process? Does this match your corporate values, culture and ways of working? If not, what changes do you need to make?

Interviewing is often referred to as an art. What can you do today to enhance your interviewing process and skills?

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*Jennifer J. Britton is the founder of Potentials Realized. Jennifer is a Certified Human Resource Professional and a Certified Professional Coach. Jennifer supports individuals, corporate clients and business owners with teamwork, balance and performance issues, through the provision of coaching, consulting and training services. Jennifer provides executive, team, group and individual coaching services, including career coaching support. As a Human Resource consultant she has worked with organizations on leadership, recruitment, selection, change management and team issues. Jennifer works with organizations across North America, and virtually serves clients around the world.*

Visit Jennifer online at <http://www.potentialsrealized.com> and <http://www.groupcoachingessentials.com>

For additional tips and tools visit the "Biz Toolkit" blog at <http://biztoolkit.blogspot.com>

You can reach Jennifer toll free at 1-866-217-1960