



Questions and answers

Utilize both old and new interview skills to attract top talent. **by Diane Thielholdt**

Recruiting and hiring the best possible people requires top-notch talent scouts who can mix old-school interviewing with fresh, cutting-edge practices. Consider how much of an impact a scout/interviewer has on a candidate: This is the potential employee's first impression of the company, and his or her opinion of and desire to work for the company are going to stem from this meeting. It's in the company's best interest, then, to make sure the interview counts.

Talented talent scouts have the abilities and knowledge to:

- Put talent first; they know how to sell recruits on the company and the job
- Look beneath the surface to iden-

tify talents needed on a team or project

- Promote the company's culture and values to others
- Attract diverse candidates who possess qualities that complement

- current competencies and perspectives
 - Create a realistic job description with a short list of critical competencies
 - Interview for talent, taking into account not only education/experience, but also emotional intelligence competencies such as social skills and empathy
 - Initiate a frank discussion about job activities, performance expectations, working conditions, rules and policies, culture, manager's style, and the company's financial stability
 - Resist finding clones of themselves; they seek diversity, variety, and balance
 - Double-check their opinion of a candidate by asking for others' opinions
 - Make an offer to the candidate based on the best qualifications for the job and the best fit with the company culture

A FRESH APPROACH

Recruiters should use these tried-and-true tactics, but also consider mixing in some novel approaches to hiring, particularly when interviewing Millennials. Here are some ideas:

- **Don't do first interviews.** Enlightened interviewers know that building personal and professional networks (including online) is a sign of a high-performing professional. And because there is so much information available online about potential candidates—via LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, etc.—it's possible to prequalify someone to determine whether he or she could be a good fit before meeting face to face. By making sure that the company and the interviewer involved have been completely vetted by the candidate, the first meeting can skip some traditional first interview questions and become more of a continuing conversation about what is already known about each other.

- **Do an online job interview.** Video interviewing can help hiring managers speak with a wide array of candidates and learn more about each prospective new hire before he or she visits the office for an in-person conversation.

- **Assign a project.** This tactic works better than an interview: Consider giving top candidates a constrained project

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to execute. Ask them to redesign a social media campaign, document a tricky bit of software, edit a sales presentation, or produce a webinar. Look at the results and decide which candidates were able to deliver real value.

• **Toss out the cookie cutter interview questions.** Forget “Where do you see yourself in five years?” Instead, ask for candidates’ perspective on real-time organizational challenges or industry trends. Their answer is far more likely to provide meaningful insight into their knowledge, thought processes, and personalities and can help make a smarter hire. Similarly, ask questions aimed to uncover work ethic and qualities that no degree can teach—like tenacity, persistence, and on-your-feet thinking. These are ageless virtues in today’s economy.

Recruiting the very best candidates possible is essential to an organization’s future. Combining traditional and new approaches to interviewing can help ensure that you find the top talent out there. ■

Thielfold is co-founder of *The Learning Cafe* (thelearningcafe.net), a consulting firm dedicated to helping organizations develop, engage, and retain the talent of every generation. An accomplished workshop facilitator, she speaks on issues involving the multigenerational workplace. Reach her at TLC@TheLearningCafe.net.

Interview questions that inspire

These discussion starters lead to interview conversations that count:

- ✓ When have you been most satisfied in your life?
- ✓ Who is your role model and why?
- ✓ Which of your talents or strengths are you most interested in using here?
- ✓ What things do you not like to do?
- ✓ What skills and capabilities are you interested in developing here? What does career growth mean to you?
- ✓ What kind of working partnership are you seeking from your manager? Your peers?
- ✓ What project or accomplishment do you consider to be the most significant in your career?
- ✓ How would this position fit your career aspirations?
- ✓ Why have you had “x” amount of jobs in “y” number of years?
- ✓ We’re constantly making things better, faster, smarter, or less expensive. We leverage technology or improve processes. In other words, we strive to do more—with less. Tell me about a recent project or problem that you made better, faster, smarter, more efficient, or less expensive.
- ✓ What questions do you have for me?

Listen beyond the answers to questions; watch for:

- ✓ Evidence of rapid learning
- ✓ Excitement over critical tasks
- ✓ Willingness to tackle new challenges —D.T.



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