



# INTERVIEW

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Transforming your business  
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**Interviewing v 1:** Consistently ruling the right people in and the wrong people out **2:** Finding the answers to all your questions **3:** Detecting and resolving red flags as they arise.

Unless you have a human resource background, it is likely that those who do most of the interviewing in your company have little or no training on this subject. I do not recall interviewing being discussed in my entire MBA program, and I do not recall anyone teaching me about interviewing before I hired my first employee. This implies interviewing is an innate talent, or simply not important. Both messages are wrong.

There are many books on the subject of interviewing—and for good reason. Hiring errors cost 7-9 weeks of pay for an entry-level person, about a year's salary for a professional person and several years' salary for senior executives and senior sales people. I do not present the following few pages as a complete answer to the subject of interviewing, but offer it as a place to begin. STM stands ready to support your hiring process from recruiting through interviewing and selection, but it is ultimately your decision to hire or not to hire the candidate. You must define and use an appropriate interview process to generate the right outcome every time. Use this document as a design template or to test your current system.

We updated this booklet to give you specific interview tips to use with the Behavior, Motivation and Competency assessments. This should aid you in screening out a greater percentage of poor candidates and reducing the number of candidates you have to assess to find the best possible employee for the seat on your bus.



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## Introduction

There are two basic interviews—**The Screening Interview** and **The Exploration Interview** and these form the two major sections of this revised booklet on interviewing. The updated material reflects information we have accumulated over the years about interviewing and links your interview to the assessments that many of you use to select the final candidates. In other words, the information in this booklet is designed to leverage your knowledge of the assessments. You can assess candidates before you run an actual assessment.

For most candidates you will review a resume and cover letter to determine if the candidate meets your basic knowledge and experience requirements. Details of how to handle this step can be found in our booklet *The Hiring Process*. The Screening interview is used to determine if the candidate should be seriously considered for employment. You are going beyond the aptitude issues to confirm that the candidate meets your attitude and fit requirements.

The Exploration Interview is used with the candidate and references checks to explore specific issues raised by earlier interviews and assessments. There may be a series of Exploration Interviews until you are sure you know everything you need to know about the candidate and are convinced he or she will be a great employee. That last comment tells you something about our philosophy in the Hiring Process.

Our objective is not simply to fill a position or select the best person from the applicant pool; our objective is to select exactly the right person to fill the right seat on your bus. A perfectly acceptable outcome is that you go through the interview and assessment process only to conclude that none of the applicants is suitable. While that can be frustrating and time consuming, better to find out before you hire the person that they cannot perform to your expectations. Hiring the wrong person is far more costly in the long run.

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# The Screening Interview

There are two rules of thumbs for an interview to screen out poor and mediocre candidates:

- ✓ Do not give the benefit of the doubt.
- ✓ Do not leave the interview with unanswered questions.

Before you pick up the phone and call the candidate—do the written documents received from the candidate meet your expectations? This includes resumes, cover letters and emails. There are specific tips for this stage in our booklet, *The Hiring Process*. But the basic rule, do not give the benefit of the doubt, means checking for:

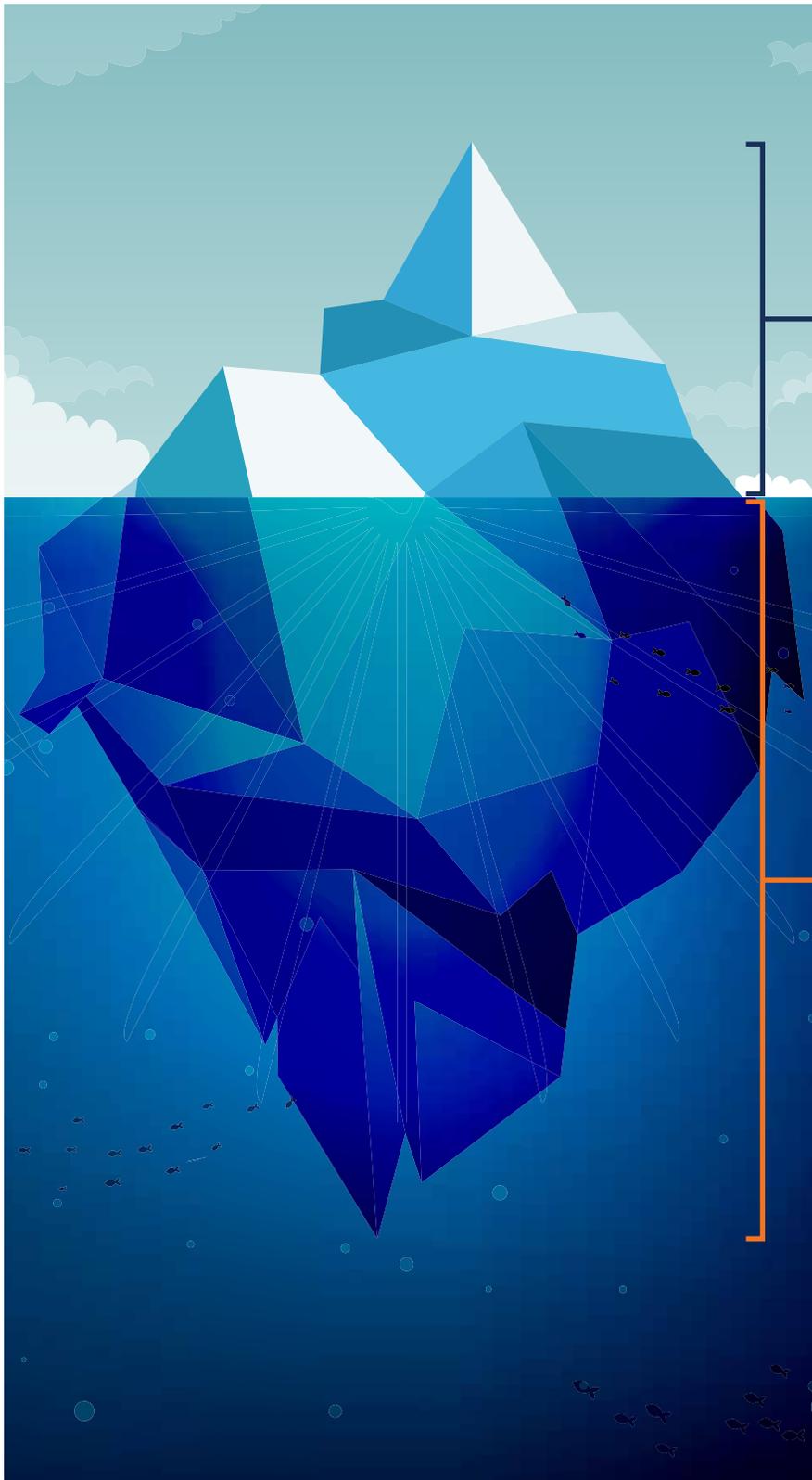
- ✓ job hopping
- ✓ ever increasing responsibilities
- ✓ a consistent industry or career focus
- ✓ the number of years experience
- ✓ education levels
- ✓ spelling and grammatical errors

If you do not like what you see here, the chances are that it is not going to get any better. Stop now and save yourself time, money and frustration!

If the candidate meets your expectations to this point, schedule a 20-40 minute phone appointment to screen for the non-tangibles such as behavior, motivation, attitude and fit. Because many of you are using assessments the following sections address the interview with each assessment in mind. This generates more useful information and may help you screen out the candidate before you pay for a formal assessment.

The entire interview process is predicated on the fact you know what you are looking for. The assessments are valuable in that they can tell us if the candidate meets or exceeds your benchmark or expectations. If you do not have a clear benchmark, STM has benchmarks for most positions, positions in specific industries, and in the case of many of you benchmarks for positions in your organization. The traditional hiring dilemma was that even if we knew what we were looking for, we simply had no reliable assessment tool to determine if the candidate met the standard. Now we do, and we can use this information to sharpen up our screening interviews and final selection decision. Read on!

# How the Assessments are Related



## Behaviors

### *How one is perceived to perform (Communication Style)*

Behaviors are visible and observable. They are not about us so much as how we are perceived by others. We are judged by how we communicate and interact with others.

## Motivators

### *Why one performs (World-View)*

Motivators shape Behaviors. They show how we determine the importance of people and things around us and what spurs us to action.

## Competency

### *Will one perform (Capacity, Attitudes, Energy and Drive)*

Competency shapes both our Behaviors and Motivators. It informs how we think about the world around us and ourselves. Competency includes attitudes, beliefs, energy and drive.

## Attributes

### *Predict performance (Common Business Success Factors)*

Attributes are specific factors common in business and organizational life that speak to our predicted performance.

# Motivators

The single most important factor for determining suitability to fill a position is the candidate's motivational profile. Each position and each organization will motivate its employees in a certain way—if the candidate is like-wise motivated she will be happy in the position. Happy employees make good employees. If you are looking for a sales person we could reasonably guess that money, growth and high energy describes both the position and the sales department. If the candidate has a background in not-for-profit organizations, she is not likely to be satisfied selling widgets for you. She will not have the assertiveness or *drive* to hit the bricks and make the sale; she can never be more than a mediocre sales person no matter how pleasant, outgoing or energetic she appears during the interview.

Motivation is by definition an internal and intangible quality. How can you interview for this? Think about areas of your life where your motivation is most evident. Is at work or at play? In other words, is what motivates you more evident in your *vocation* or *avocation*? Your motivation is revealed most clearly by what you do in your free time or as a hobby.

A caveat before we continue. Motivation is NOT associated with Behavior. Consider this exchange:

**What do you like to do when you have the free time?**

I am a voracious reader. I read all the time.

**What course or classes have you taken recently?**

I love taking classes and learning new things. I am enrolled in night school.

The benchmark for the position is someone who is motivated by learning and studying new things. Is this person motivated to learn? The correct answer is / *have no idea!* Reading a book or taking a class are *behaviors* and can be driven by any number of *motivators*. You need to know *why* they are taking a class or reading the book. To get beyond the mere behavioral elements in the above exchange you must dig a bit deeper. In this exchange we see the candidate has no particular interest in learning:

**What do you like to do when you have the free time?**

I am a voracious reader. I read all the time.

**What are you reading right now?**

I have not had the time recently to read anything but school texts, I am enrolled in night school.

**What was the last book you read before you enrolled in school?**

I love reading science fiction. I read Asimov's Foundation Trilogy two summers ago.

**What are you taking in school?**

Business courses.

**Sounds like it keeps you busy, why are you taking business courses?**

I have been in the same position for 4 years and my employer tells me that with a degree I can become a manager, I will get a substantial raise.

There is nothing wrong with wanting a raise—but what this exchange reveals is that the candidate is not motivated to learn and most likely motivated to make money and or get ahead. If you really need a learner in this position, this candidate may not be the right choice.

**First Tip:** *When you think you have your answer, ask two more questions to be sure.*

This table indicates some hobbies and activities that might confirm motivation—but you always have to push a bit harder to uncover whether the hobby or activity is truly indicative of the motivation. Some behaviors, such as reading, are suggestive of multiple motivators but there are subtle differences you can look for. Note the shorthand notation in capital letters:

<b>Knowledge &amp; Discovery</b>	Read trade journals, current events, biographies, history, non fiction. Taking classes, seminars, education opportunities. Teaching, coaching, mentors others. <b>LEARNING AND EDUCATION FOCUSED</b>
<b>Return on Investment (ROI)</b>	No true hobbies. Most activities directly related to making more money and often includes long hours at work. Does not take vacations. <b>VALUE AND MONEY FOCUSED</b>
<b>Leadership</b>	Competitive sports, showy cars and activities. Politics, leadership positions on volunteer boards. Hobbies that involve leading others or self to win or stand out in some way <b>POLITICAL CONTROL AND RECOGNITION</b>
<b>Aesthetic</b>	Painter, musician or craft related hobbies. Interest in languages including computer languages, culture or mathematics. Nature, travel, non competitive sports and self improvement activities. <b>CREATIVE AND SYSTEMS FOCUSED</b>

<b>Helping Others</b>	Regular or long term volunteer service. Teaching, coaching, mentoring or simply being with others. Active in social issues that are other focused. <b>HELPFUL AND FOCUSED ON OTHERS</b>
<b>Guiding Principles</b>	Religion or other strongly held beliefs. Activities and interests related to history and the past. Interest and activities with family, community and holidays. <b>PRINCIPLE AND BELIEF FOCUSED</b>
<b>Peace &amp; Harmony</b>	Meditation, massage or other physical/spiritual methods to seek balance. Interest in eastern cultures or methodologies. Interested in organizations and tools that promote peace and non-violence. <b>BALANCE AND TRANQUILITY FOCUSED</b>

## Behaviors

Interpersonal behavior is the first thing we notice about anyone we meet. We tend to make a judgment in about 10 seconds that this person is like me or not which translates into, *I like them or not*. This is how most interviews proceed—the entire judgment about the candidate is based on whether or not we like them! Behavior, however, is about 50-60% accurate in predicting success in a position. That being said, it is important to evaluate behavior in an objective fashion in order to establish fit within a team, communication style and how they build relationships with people. At another level, behavior can tell you something about stress which may indicate underlying problems.

**By example:** If you are hiring someone to sell to a hard nosed, business oriented client who is frequently blunt and occasionally even rude, you need to hire an assertive, direct and equally hard nosed sales person. The client's impression of a quiet, reserved sales person will be negative, and the new sales person may well be intimidated by this client. No matter the motivational profile of the sales person—this relationship is doomed to fail. If your client base is broad and includes all sorts of different people, you may want to hire a sales person who is flexible, customer oriented and has outstanding interpersonal skill—they will be able to talk to almost anyone with ease.

Any question at all can yield behavior information. You need not have a specific set of questions in order to interview for behavior. Your feelings and reactions to the person are important as you are attempting to determine if the person can work with you and your team, but we want to be sure to take you beyond your feelings. Key things to listen for during this segment of the interview:

- ✓ **Pace**—how fast do they speak? Do they dominate the conversation? Do they interrupt?
- ✓ **Tone**—are they quiet or loud? Are they deferential and diplomatic? Are they blunt and plain?
- ✓ **Focus**—are they people or task oriented? What do they mention first?
- ✓ **Emotion**—are they controlled or driven? Do they wear their feelings on their sleeve?

**Second Tip:** Behavior is about *how* the candidate talks, not what he says.

Behavior is relatively easy to interview for, you have been doing it all your life. Behavior is by definition observable and so it highly conducive to the interview. Here are some tips about interviewing for behavior. Note the shorthand notation in capital letters:

<p><b>D: Dominance</b></p>	<p>Loud, fast, dominates the conversation. Blunt and to the point. Decisive, quick to make a decision and may exhibit anger. <b>TASK FOCUSED AND EXTROVERTED</b></p>
<p><b>I: Influence</b></p>	<p>Friendly, humorous, dominates the conversation. Optimistic and people oriented. Open and enthusiastic. <b>PEOPLE FOCUSED AND EXTROVERTED</b></p>
<p><b>S: Steadiness</b></p>	<p>Quiet, relaxed and friendly. Team oriented and not emotional. Prefers that things stay the same. <b>PEOPLE FOCUSED AND INTROVERTED</b></p>
<p><b>C: Compliance</b></p>	<p>Quiet, diplomatic, accurate and precise. Clean, neat and detail oriented. Risk averse, safety conscious. <b>TASK FOCUSED AND INTROVERTED</b></p>

# Targeted Assessment Profiles

This is the most challenging profile to determine by interview, but the most important. This assessment is the differentiator. If your candidate appears to have the right behaviors and the correct motivators for the position you need to determine their attitudes, thinking process and energy levels to make an accurate final decision. There are 6 Dimensions that you need to understand:

## EXTERNAL FACTORS

<p><b>Empathetic Outlook</b></p>	<p><b>EMPATHY FOR OTHERS</b>            They see others as individuals.  <b>HIGH:</b> They are anxious to please others, cannot say “no”.  <b>MEDIUM:</b> Healthy respect for others but able to keep some distance.  <b>LOW:</b> Do not understand others and likely to hurt or offend others.</p>
<p><b>Practical Thinking</b></p>	<p><b>PLANNING, DETAILS AND SOCIAL SKILL</b>            They see process and projects unfolding ahead of them.  <b>HIGH:</b> They enjoy projects and handling the details, may be poor delegators.  <b>MEDIUM:</b> Very good with projects and details but understand that things happen to the best laid plans.  <b>LOW:</b> Cannot see the detail or how projects flow from “A” to “Z”; pessimistic.</p>
<p><b>Systems Judgment</b></p>	<p><b>RULES AND PROCEDURES</b>            They see the need for rules and structure.  <b>HIGH:</b> They are micro managers, over controlling. Dependent on rules and procedure.  <b>MEDIUM:</b> Know what is required and how to communicate it to others; flexible.  <b>LOW:</b> Rebellious of authority or does not like to be managed.</p>

## INTERNAL FACTORS

<p><b>Self Esteem</b></p>	<p><b>THEMSELVES</b>            They see themselves clearly.  <b>HIGH:</b> They are narcissistic, refer to themselves constantly.  <b>MEDIUM:</b> Healthy but see the need for improvement.  <b>LOW:</b> Depressed, negative or overly focused on external matters.</p>
<p><b>Role Awareness</b></p>	<p><b>THEIR WORK</b>            They see their personal or professional roles clearly.  <b>HIGH:</b> They love what they are doing, are hard workers and have high energy.  <b>MEDIUM:</b> They are OK with what they are doing, but see a better situation ahead—solid energy. Could be a reaction to a poor job.  <b>LOW:</b> Negative and unhappy about what they do, do not see things getting better.</p>
<p><b>Self Direction</b></p>	<p><b>THE FUTURE</b>            They see the future they want clearly.  <b>HIGH:</b> They are crystal clear about where they are going and how to get there and have high energy.  <b>MEDIUM:</b> They are reasonably clear about how to move forward and optimistic about the future—solid energy. Could be a reaction to a poor job.  <b>LOW:</b> Negative and completely disconnected from the future, a follower not a leader.</p>

Set the bait with questions about past employers and companies the person has worked for. A rebellious attitude will not be able to resist bad mouthing previous employers and managers. While many people change jobs because of poor management, you need to determine if this candidate caused the problems or found himself on the receiving end of poor management. Low Systems Judgment makes managing them a challenge and they will have trouble managing others. Their lack of clarity about the rules, procedures and systems hobbles their ability to communicate clear expectations to others.

Good questions to ask: You should be able to rate each of the six factors high, medium or low by listening carefully to the candidate's answers to all your questions. In other words, you may pick up in questions about motivation and behavior that their Empathy for Others is strong—because they talk only about other people and how they enjoy making them happy or doing things for them. The following specific questions may also be useful—they are presented in the same order as the preceding table.

## **EXTERNAL FACTORS**

Energy is critical, but we need to know if the energy is directed in a useful way. Depending on the position you are seeking to fill, the benchmark for this position will require certain capacities for success. There are a few supermen and women out there, but most people will be very successful even with a couple of warts and wrinkles. Your assignment is to pick the important warts and wrinkles. Here are some ways to figure that out.

### **Empathetic Outlook—Empathy for Others**

This is a very important factor. The best test for this is talking to your receptionist and others about how the candidate treated them. Also watch for inappropriate jokes and comments, such a person simply does not realize the comments are offensive. This is especially difficult in a leader—as people will feel the lack of respect and caring. Use questions about handling delicate personnel matters to measure Empathy for Others. The key separation you must make is the candidate's level of empathy and their ability to distance themselves from other's problems. Most every business position benefits from strong empathy, but a customer service position may require a strong desire to please others, while a management or sales position requires more distance with others.

### **Practical Thinking—Planning, Details And Social Skill**

*This is also a very important factor.* Have the candidate walk you through the process of planning and executing a project. The ease and thoroughness with which they do this is a good indicator of high Practical Thinking. Quiz them about how they handle problems, unexpected events and changes. A good

planner has considered all the possibilities and has the capability of rethinking the plan on the fly. Strong scores here suggest mastery of the details and great social skills. The latter point is critical—they master projects and details and people the same way—they know them inside out and can get what they want. Now your challenge is to separate a person with outstanding social skill from a manipulator. This is a fine line sometimes, and the answer may come from the next factor.

### Good questions to ask:

- ✓ On a complex project, what tools do you use to keep yourself organized?
- ✓ How do you get started with a complex project?
- ✓ How do you handle interruptions and unexpected problems?

### Systems Judgment—Rules and Procedures:

If you pick up an overall negative tone, beware.

- ✓ Set up a hypothetical situation about following procedures versus getting something done.
- ✓ If you were in charge of your last company, what changes would you make?
- ✓ How do you communicate expectations to employees?

**Third Tip:** *Listen carefully to what the candidate sees most clearly around him.*

## INTERNAL FACTORS

We are very interested in the candidate's answers to questions about the future, their work and themselves as this tells us about their energy levels. You have to be cautious as sometimes these factors are low for reasons of a temporary nature—like personal difficulties, a job layoff or other serious yet temporary problems. But you must still keep in mind that their energy level will be low and they may not *hit the ground running*. The future may be a plateau rather than a steep incline. Youth will do this also—a young person may not have great direction or role awareness. Take into account the whole person.

### Self Esteem—Themselves

One of the classic energy *drains* is something we call the Bureaucratic mindset. This person has a high opinion of themselves and sees no particular need to improve or even work hard. This is someone, no matter their age, who has already “retired” and forgot to mention it to anyone. Signals abound, but are most often confused with self confidence. Self confidence is a good thing; it means they present well and strongly. Narcissism means the only thing important to me is *me*. The narcissist has never made an error or a mistake;

they are very happy with themselves and show no interest in self improvement. Nothing and no one is as important as themselves and for that reason you do not want to hire them! The best way to judge this factor is by listening to all their answers on other subjects—if it always comes back to them no matter the question, one has to assume that their Self Esteem is through the roof.

### Role Awareness—Their Work

Listen closely to the candidate's attitude about projects and work. How much do they like their work today? Do they talk about projects and opportunities with a rising tone and excitement in their voice or do they, as one client reported, yawn every time you ask about their work, favorite projects or future goals? Some specific questions:

- ✓ What is the favorite thing you do in the course of your day?
- ✓ What would you like to be doing in an ideal world?
- ✓ How do you like to be managed?

Strong, clear, and rapid fire responses again suggest that the individual has high Role Awareness and probably works tons of overtime just because he loses track of the time.

### Self Direction—The Future

This is the single most important line of questioning. Ask questions about the future at different points during the interview:

- ✓ What do you want to accomplish this first year?
- ✓ Where would you like to be in 5 years?
- ✓ What will you be doing 10 years from now?

Specific, clear and rapid answers to those questions suggest the person has a clear vision of the future and they have had it for some time. This speaks directly to Self Direction and may spill over to Role Awareness. By example, would you consider the following a specific and clear answer to a future oriented question?

*I will be able to double sales in that department and consistently gain high marks from the customers. We will be celebrating our success and growth over the years with a PR campaign and internal celebrations. The employees will be happy because raises and promotions are handed out like candy at Halloween.*

How specific is this answer? After you weed out generalities and “politically correct” statements, what do you really have? *Nothing*. When I say that someone is not clear about the future, they may literally tell you “I don't know” in answer to your question—BUT if they are socially adept and good verbally,

such as a high “I”, they can think on their feet and talk for hours at the drop of a hat. To repeat: *You want specific, clear answers not general sentiment.* Here is how a high energy person might answer your question—notice the specificity and well thought out process behind the words:

*I am convinced that organizations are successful because they have great people. My strategy would begin with changes in how we choose, manage and promote staff. I would seek out people with high energy and a strong work ethic and coach them to take on more responsibility. With the right people in the right seats in our organization we will be able to dramatically increase productivity while keeping costs at the same or lower levels. Next we would...*

This answer delivered at a rapid fire clip and in a firm manner, suggests that he has been thinking about this issue and knows exactly how to move the organization. You have to put this in context with all your other conclusions—such as a high “I” is articulate and good on their feet. But a consistent picture of high energy, focus on the future and clarity of purpose on two or three different questions would be enough to convince me to take such a candidate to the next level and have them do an assessment, check references and conduct Exploration Interviews.

**Fourth Tip:** *Energy comes from within. No specific goals, direction, desires or dreams?*

*No energy.*

## The Exploration Interview

The purpose of the exploration interview is to establish the significance of issues raised by the assessments, reference checks, resume reviews and so on. Perhaps the candidate understands their deficiency in one area and has taken steps to modify their behavior over the years, thereby blunting the significance of a cited deficiency. Conversely, perhaps the candidate is unaware of their behaviors and the impact on those around them, which would exacerbate the urgency of the problem. Most candidates have some unattractive quality, and the question comes down to this: *Are you aware of the significance of the issue and are you willing to take the management time and effort to resolve the problem, or are you willing to live with it?*

**Fifth Tip:** Hiring Issues become Management Issues as soon as you hire the candidate.

Formulate hypothetical scenarios about typical events in your organization—and develop a series of questions around each scenario. The questions should be designed to reveal the candidate’s thinking about the situation

without coming right out and asking a yes/no question about that situation. Each question should be asked without elaboration and with an open-ended invitation for the candidate to respond. Each successive question around the same hypothetical scenario should build the stress level, and provide additional insight as to the candidate's true feelings on the matter. Listen carefully.

**Sixth Tip:** *Successful interviewers talk 10% of the time; the candidate talks 90% of the time.*

Do not be surprised when you get the “right” answer to a hypothetical question. As you follow-up with an “escalator” question, adding a level of stress, gauge the candidate's body language and non-verbal response. Be prepared for more revealing answers as you stay with this escalation technique for at least three iterations—pay as much attention to the words spoken as to body language, humorous comments, and unguarded comments. To the last point I remind you about the TV detective “Columbo”. Peter Falk would solve his cases by asking the key question as he was getting up to leave, or while chit-chatting with the suspect.

**Seventh Tip:** *70% of communication is non-verbal. Watch body language carefully.*

Humor is an issue worth a few additional comments. People use humor to convey ideas they feel cannot be said directly. An off-hand response that “I would fire the guy!” (said with a big grin of course) could translate into, “I'm serious, I would fire the guy.” But perhaps the candidate is not comfortable just saying so. Humor can also be used as a defense, “What would you do, leave me hanging out to dry on that one?” (said with a big grin, again) means that they are detecting a difference of opinion here and want to know where you stand.

### **Let's go through an example:**

The assessment suggests that the individual sticks to their ideas dogmatically and will not change their approach with people or their job under any circumstances. This is a customer service manager candidate. The good thing in this style is that the candidate will not “give away the store”; on the other hand it could be a problem if the candidate never bends the rules for unhappy customers. The object of the Exploration Interview is you need to establish just how flexible or inflexible the individual will be.

### **Develop a scenario:**

A very unhappy customer is on the phone demanding redress for the problems experienced with your product. Ask the candidate, *how would you handle that individual?* Expect a conventional and correct answer, and encourage the candidate to keep talking.

### Escalator Question #1:

*In the course of the complaint you understand the customer has had two replacement products installed over the past 3 months and your technician is still not able to make it work properly—how would you handle this?* Because you have added a bit of stress, you may get a more interesting answer—but still, a savvy candidate knows that he cannot just give away the store or shut down a complaining customer, so expect another “right” answer.

### Escalator Question #2 assumes the candidate has given in to the customer:

*You would refund the money without investigation or talking to the field technician? Wouldn't that get expensive? These are \$25,000 units!* Conversely, assume the candidate has refused to give in to the customer. *The customer is really angry now and wants to talk to the CEO.* Is that the result you want? As you escalate the stress factors you will get a more accurate picture where the line between flexibility and inflexibility lies in order to make an accurate hiring decision.

Again, the words are less important than body language. Crossed arms suggest defensiveness or discomfort. Shifting in one's seat is the same. Slouched back in the chair with hands behind the head suggests ease and comfort or perhaps over familiarity or devil may care. Behaviors are predicted by the assessment, and so if someone is flagged as introverted and quiet—do not hold it against them that they were quiet and soft spoken in the interview. If that style will not work with your clients—then you should not be interviewing them in the first place. Conversely, the glad-handing, broad smiling, talkative candidate is exhibiting her natural behavior. Whatever the behavior, look at the body language in context of the assessment and the specific position you have in mind. If you do not get your questions answered—have someone else conduct an Exploration Interview on those points or plan a new line of questioning yourself.

**Eighth Tip:** *Hire for Aptitude and you will end up firing for Attitude.*

## Review: The Interview Process

Interviewing is the most critical job in your company. Hire the wrong manager or president or carpenter, and find out just how much damage can be caused by one uncaring, disloyal, or accident-prone employee. Following is a basic interviewing model.

### STAGE 1: The First Date

Each stage leading to the final interview is designed to screen out applicants who clearly do not measure up, which avoids the expense of time and money

to conduct a thorough face-to-face interview or assessment. The first thing you need to do is scan the resume for the minimum requirements for the position. If the candidate passes this lowest level of screening, phone him or her for a 20-40 minute interview. The purpose of the interview is to scan the person for the minimum behavior, motivation, attitude and fit requirements for the position.

For this phone interview have one or two scenarios prepared that are most indicative of what is required in the position. Prepare questions concerning issues with the resume—gaps, frequent job changes, lack of training and so on. Have another couple of questions ready about basic requirements—relocation, travel, pay and so on. In addition to the hard answers you are looking for—judge their MOTIVATION, BEHAVIOR and PERSONAL TALENT SKILLS INVENTORY as outlined in the Screening Interview section of this booklet. If the client fails the “first date” scan, thank them and hang up the phone fast. If not, invite them to participate in your on-line assessment program, explain it as part of your internal system to assure you are making the best possible choice for your company, which is in the interests of both the candidate and your company.

**Ninth Tip:** *Your mother was right. Do not kiss on the first date.*

## **STAGE 2: The First Kiss**

It makes sense to assess the candidate after the Screening Interview and before the more intense Exploration Interviews and reference checks. Either you have an idea of what you are looking for because you have hired for and assessed prior candidates for this position, or we have benchmarked the profile you need for this position. In either case the assessments do two things:

- ✓ They confirm that the candidate is right for this position, and
- ✓ Provide a wealth of material from which to plan and prepare Exploration Interviews.

It is critical you plan the interview—the Exploration Interview is a costly and critical stage in the hiring process. You have gone to great lengths to avoid interviewing the obviously wrong candidate, and so it is quite likely the person before you is attractive in many ways. It is imperative that the interview, or more likely, the multiple interviews are well planned and carefully designed. The critical step is to develop a series of scenarios that will decisively validate or eliminate red flags raised by the assessments. The assessments plus your knowledge of the position are key inputs.

We recommend that all candidates hired or not be given their assessments. It leaves the unsuccessful candidate with something of value from your company, which creates good will. For the successful candidate, the assessment is the

first step in developing their talent, modifying their behavior and introducing them to your culture. We do not advise that you give the candidates the confidential summary report we provide. The confidential summary contains open and frank appraisal not only of the candidate's style, but also of people on your staff and your company's culture.

**Tenth Tip:** *Assess for all positions. A hiring mistake is costly no matter if it is the receptionist or Chairman of the Board.*

### **STAGE 3: Meeting Your Parents**

We encourage group interviews where possible. When you do that, each interviewer takes on a distinctly different set of issues for the interview. Each interviewer prepares to ask questions in one area. Others may ask clarifying questions on that topic, but the lead person will take notes, ask his/her prepared questions and be nominally in charge. A typical format:

**Interviewer 1**—Focus on technical capability, knowledge and suitability for the role. Interviewer chosen for technical competence.

**Interviewer 2**—Focus on management knowledge, skill and suitability. Will this candidate get things done through our people, will she develop our people and can she confront inappropriate employee behavior and poor results? Develop hypothetical situations you know will arise because they have come up before, or you anticipate certain conflicts among people or between this candidate and particular staff members. Interviewer chosen for competence as people manager.

**Interviewer 3**—Focus on leadership knowledge, skill and suitability. Will this candidate be the one to take us to the future, are they excellent communicators, and is their vision consistent with ours? Establish hypothetical scenarios based on where you see the company headed. Interviewer chosen for competence as leader.

**Interviewer 4**—Focus on behavior, motivation and attitudes suitable for the position. This person may largely be an observer to the interview. Validate the assessments and explore issues raised by the assessments. Recommend other assessments. Interviewer chosen for their knowledge of behavior, motivation and attitudes as a success factor in hiring selection.

Immediately following the departure of the candidate or at a later meeting each interviewer will report back to the rest of the interviewers their notes, findings and conclusions. The key is to make sure each interviewer heard the same thing; score the candidate against pre-determined criteria. Scores are a useful way to compare candidates. See a sample score sheets, next section.

There may be multiple interviews. The more critical the position to the company, the more people you will want to involve with the interview. Supervisors and managers, teammates, colleagues from around the company, perhaps

even key customers, vendors or strategic partners. Given the possibility of many interviewers taking many different points of view it is important to use a standard set of criteria to judge the applicants—examples follow on the next two pages.

## Key Reminders

- ✓ **Know yourself.** If you are highly optimistic, willing to help or please others, know that you will have trouble being objective about a candidate's flaws. This is an issue for most interviewers.
- ✓ **Know exactly what you are looking for (and not looking for) in a candidate.** Assessments and interviews are only useful to the extent you are clear on your expectations and have a benchmark.
- ✓ **Do not yield the benefit of the doubt.** Chase down every contradictory statement, inconclusive answer and question that you have. Introduce stress into the interview process and be prepared to quantify and compare each candidate's predicted success in the position.
- ✓ **Finally, plan for and be organized about each interview.**

## Re-cap of the Ten Interview Tips:

**First Tip:** *When you think you have your answer, ask two more questions to be sure.*

**Second Tip:** *Behavior is about how the candidate talks, not what he says.*

**Third Tip:** *Listen carefully to what the candidate sees most clearly around him.*

**Fourth Tip:** *Energy comes from within. No specific goals, direction, desires or dreams? No energy.*

**Fifth Tip:** *Hiring Issues become Management Issues as soon as you hire the candidate.*

**Sixth Tip:** *Successful interviewers talk 10% of the time; the candidate talks 90% of the time.*

**Seventh Tip:** *70% of communication is non-verbal. Watch body language carefully.*

**Eighth Tip:** *Hire for Aptitude and you will end up firing for Attitude.*

**Ninth Tip:** *Your mother was right. Do not kiss on the first date.*

**Tenth Tip:** *Assess for all positions. A hiring mistake is costly no matter if it is the receptionist or Chairman of the Board.*

# APPENDIX 1: Hiring Evaluation Worksheets

Candidate's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Evaluation Scale:

- 1 (low) Overwhelming number of significant concerns.
- 2 (moderate) Exhibits some ability and experience; will need additional training and management time to develop.
- 3 (high) Exhibits great deal of ability, experience and skills to work successfully in our organization
- 4 (superior) No concerns whatsoever. Will perform extremely well and inspire others by their example.

INTERVIEW RESULTS	EVALUATION (1, 2, 3, 4) / NOTES AND COMMENTS	
<b>Technical Capability &amp; Knowledge</b>		
Education		
Work Experience		
Technical Skills		
Specialized Training Experience		
Analytical / Problem Solving Skills		
<b>Subtotal</b>		
<b>Attitude and Values</b>		
Communication Skills		
Drive / Energy		
Reliability		
Initiative		
Ability to Plan		
Ability to Meet Schedules		
Creativity		
Confidence		
Maturity		
<b>Subtotal</b>		
Fit and Logistical Issues		
Team Orientation		
Risk Orientation		
Stress Tolerance		
Interpersonal Style		
Independence		
Travel Issues		
Overtime Issues		
Relocation Issues		
Compensation Expectations		
<b>Subtotal</b>		
<b>Grand Total</b>		

Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Evaluation Scale:**

ONLY RANK THE FACTORS REQUIRED BY YOUR BENCHMARK.

- Blank Not required in this position, by our benchmark and expectations.
- 1 (misses) Does not exhibit this factor.
- 2 (meets) Exhibits some capability in this factor; skills may need additional training and management time to develop.
- 3 (exceeds) Exhibits great deal of ability in this factor; demonstrates qualities and experience valuable to working successfully in our organization.

ASSESSMENT FACTORS	EVALUATION (1,2,3) / NOTES AND COMMENTS	
<b>Motivation</b>		
Knowledge & discovery		
Return on investment (roi)		
Leadership		
Aesthetic		
Helping others		
Guiding principles		
Peace & harmony		
<b>Subtotal</b>		
<b>Behavior</b>		
<b>D:</b> Dominance		
<b>I:</b> Influence		
<b>S:</b> Steadiness		
<b>C:</b> Compliance		
<b>Subtotal</b>		
<b>COMPETENCIES</b>		
<b>External Factors</b>		
Relationships (People)		
Practical Thinking (Tasks)		
(Systems) Judgment		
<b>Internal Factors</b>		
Self Esteem		
Role Awareness		
Self Direction		
<b>Subtotal</b>		

## APPENDIX 2: Hiring Calculator

This tool can help you dollarize the value of hiring the right employee the first time—and is a useful exercise to lend urgency to your selection process. Following is a simplified version:

	SALARY COSTS	HARD COSTS	SOFT COSTS	VACANT ROLES
<b>DIRECT COSTS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Salary</li> <li>Signing bonus and training expenses</li> <li>Benefits</li> <li>Taxes and other costs for a Total Salary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Separation processing—including coaching, counseling, “managing” and other direct expenses</li> <li>Recruiting costs for search firms, ads, resume screening, interviewing, reference checking, background checks, testing and other on-Boarding costs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bad Public Relations/ impacts on vendor relations/ the cost of other relationship issues</li> <li>Lost productivity of executive team—what they could have been producing while dealing with these issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lost income or benefit while this key position is vacant</li> </ul>
<b>PRODUCTIVITY COSTS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Time it takes to get up to speed in this position extended by their total direct salary cost for the period</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Burden placed on co-workers or direct reports extended by the average salary of all the people affected for the period</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lost productivity on key projects or initiatives</li> <li>Good employees who left because of this person’s management style—and the cost to replace them</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lost income or benefit due to the unnecessary departure of good employees</li> </ul>

Now, add up the numbers in each box—what is the Total Salary (white box)? \$ \_\_\_\_\_

What are the Total Costs (add up all the gray boxes)? \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Calculate the ratio of Total Costs/Total Salary: Turnover Cost Ratio \_\_\_\_\_%

Typically, turnover cost is 100% to 200% of the extended salary, or more. Multiply your ratio by the salaries of people who have left, on average, each year.

**Annual Turnover Cost** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

# APPENDIX 3: Hire for Aptitude, Fire for Attitude

*Art Boulay, MBA*

The top three problems for most business owners and CEOs: Hiring, developing and retaining the right people. Hiring is critical given that hiring errors cost 7-9 weeks of pay for an entry-level person, about a year's salary for a professional person and several years' salary for senior executives and senior sales people (Harris Plotkin, *Building a Winning Team*, 1997). When you think of your business over the past 20 years you probably have seen great changes due to the computer, the internet and other technological innovations. When you think of your hiring process over the past 20 years my bet is that it is largely unchanged. Our goals for this chapter: Significantly improve your hiring success rate, improve retention, reduce turnover and reduce management headaches.

## Turnover

If you think the costs of turnover outlined above are too high—stop here and jot some figures on the back of an envelop. When you place a want ad what does that cost? Factor in the time you and your staff process resumes, screen out poor candidates and interview the favorable ones. Did you factor in the time it takes the new employee to get up to speed? How about the time others spend away from their duties training the new person or answering his or her questions? If the last employee did not work out for some reason—did you allow for lost productivity for you or your staff attempting to manage that person to success? How about the negative impact on morale and customer service? Did you lose any customers due to that person's performance (or lack thereof)? How about lost business opportunities?

One client, desperate to fill a position, hired a candidate whom we had evaluated as a poor choice. They breathed a sigh of relief when he quit 6 months later because they had just received a letter from their largest and steadiest client that said if they did not remove him from their account they would look for a new vendor. They put two and two together and began to suspect that some other client defections were likely due to this poor hire. All said and done this one poor hire cost them an estimated \$2,000,000 in business.

**Thinking Question:** *Do you know your turnover rate and what it is costing you?*

## Mediocrity

You may be thinking *my staff is pretty good I do not have any "bad" employees*. When I speak to different groups of business owners and CEOs I routinely ask

this question: *What percentage of your employees would you rate as mediocre performers?* How would you answer that question? Are you surprised that our rather unscientific survey typically elicits responses of 60%? I suggest to you that mediocrity is worse than outwardly poor performance. Poor performers self identify and spur us to act—typically we attempt reform and if that does not work we fire them. Mediocre performers are nice people, they “try” hard and we keep giving them another chance. For a short time they do a little better, then they slip, they plead and we give them another chance. How many dollars could you add to the bottom line this year if all the mediocre performers were replaced with top performers?

**Thinking Question:** *Using an objective standard—how many of your staff are top performers? How many on your staff fall short of that standard? How much does this performance gap cost the bottom line?*

## The Interview

Another question we like to ask when speaking to groups: According to a Michigan State University study only 14% of corporate interviews are effective. *Does this sound correct to you?* We are typically assured that this is an accurate figure. At a recent presentation, one gentleman called out that 14% was too high!

So what does this tell us? If you wish to build a staff of top-notch performers with minimal turnover, you have to change the way you hire people. If the interview is your primary hiring tool, there are ways to make it more useful.

Hiring is like dating and marriage. During the interview everyone is on his or her best *dating* behavior. Twenty-four hours after the probationary period is over you discover you married Frankenstein. This may also happen when they go from temp status to permanent status. The interview questions are often misdirected anyway. Many organizations hire for **aptitude**—resumes, friendly references, appearance and behavior—and fire for **attitude**. *They did not fit in. They had no energy. They were not motivated.*

**Conclusion:** *Sharpen your Interview Questions.* Know what you are looking for in terms of attitude: energy, capability, focus, integrity and motivation. Ask questions that get them to talk about themselves for 90% of the interview; you should only be talking 10% of the interview. Ask questions about the future. If they can talk clearly and succinctly about the future, this is one indicator of high energy. Vagueness and generalities suggest mediocre energy levels and performance. Pose a series of related questions that build the stress factors around a hypothetical situation. Pay attention to their emotional state, anxiety and stability. More stable means they are probably what you are looking for; less stable suggests they have inner conflicts that sap their energy and productivity.

Most of our clients are nice people. They got to where they are because they work hard, treat other people well and are generous with their time, resources and knowledge. In the interview you must adopt a more skeptical attitude. For the duration of the interview you must adopt a “no more Mr. Nice Guy” attitude. The interview is no time to give the benefit of the doubt; it is the right time to chase down your hunches and challenge every statement the candidate offers. Do not leave an interview wishing you had asked why the candidate left her last position, why all the job hopping on the resume, or what was she doing for 6 months between jobs last year. Many of your candidates have been self employed. Ask *why on earth would you want to work for someone else? Won't you miss the freedom, the money and the lack of supervision?* If the candidate has an answer for every challenge and does not lose their cool, then you can expect the same under a high pressure situation at work.

## Hiring Selection

One of the things we have learned working with our clients to successfully hire thousands of employees: You need to add technology to the hiring process. The interview is best suited to validate objective information that dependable tools give you—it is poorly suited to predict future performance. I say this because many of our clients only interview a handful of people per year, and have had no interview training. To some extent interviewing is like any skill—the more you do it the better you become.

For most people, the key is to *add* reliable, validated and *field proven* assessment tools to the hiring process. Assessments provide objective data about the candidate and allow you to focus your final round of interviews on key remaining issues. Do not replace your entire hiring process with an assessment—no matter how accurate and dependable it is. Interviews, reference checks, resumes and transcripts all provide unique and useful information to make the right decision. A carefully selected and well-applied assessment adds a new dimension to the hiring decision.

**Conclusion:** *Assess all Candidates.* Know what you are looking for before you get started. Choose instruments that get to the attitude issues that differentiate between mediocre and high performing employees. Do not be satisfied with assessments that address only skills or behaviors. Consider multiple levels of assessments:

**Skills:** How we go about our work and what we know.

**Behaviors:** *How we act and how we are with other people.* Together with Skills is about 40% predictive of success on the job.

**Motivators:** Why we do what we do; what gets us out of bed in the morning. Alone is about 70% predictive of success on the job. If you

are doing something you enjoy you will tend to work it, master it and look forward to doing it again.

**Capacity:** *Will we perform; what gives us energy.* Tends to close the remaining gap and gives us a very accurate picture of how successful the candidate will be once hired. No assessment is 100% accurate. Apply available technology to the hiring process and you will improve the accuracy of your hiring decisions.

## Post Hire

What about after you have hired someone? You may have experienced high turnover with your newest employees. There are three common reasons for this. Corning Glass identified that 70% of the employees rating employee orientation highly were likely to stay at least three years. Another firm was able to reduce annual turnover rates by 40%, and much of that decline was attributed to more effective orientation of new employees. (Rebecca Ganzel, "Putting Out the Welcome Mat", Training, March 1998, 54-61). So bring them in and put them on the right track!

The second key to retaining good employees is to make expectations crystal clear. Most of the people you select for hire understand and appreciate structure—and it stands to reason they will be more productive with more structure than less structure. If you bring aboard someone who understands and needs structure, and give them only vague requirements, you will lose a key opportunity to gain their trust and respect.

The final key to retention is planning and goal setting. As soon as possible have the new employee work on written goals and targets. Their manager should work with them to track goal achievement and provide feedback along the way. You have heard this before, but do you know why it works? It is all about energy. People who have high energy for performance tend to have clear picture of the future and "see" the steps to make it real. They also tend to have strong integrity and operate at a higher level than other people.

The most difficult and costly of all business problems are people problems. If you want to reduce people related costs, start with the Hiring Process. Look to every step of that process for improvements and pay particular attention to the Interview. Apply technology to the people Selection challenge. Technology has improved the productivity in all areas of the business—isn't it time to apply technology to the most costly area of the business? Once you hire this top performer find ways to maintain and develop their Energy and understanding of your structure. Happy employees do not look for "greener pastures".

# APPENDIX 4: Interview Questions You Can and Cannot Ask

These guidelines will help you distinguish between lawful, acceptable interview questions and those that are unlawful. These guidelines are not complete and only provide major highlights. Remember: any question that is not specifically job-related may be construed as unlawful. Generally, if you do ask a question, you must consistently ask the question in every interview.

CATEGORY	OK TO ASK	DO NOT ASK
<b>Age</b>	<p>If hired can you provide proof of age and / or submit a work permit?</p> <p>Are you over or under 18? (If not, proof of age and work permit required)</p>	<p>What is your date of birth?</p> <p>How old are you?</p>
<b>Arrests &amp; Convictions</b>	<p>Have you been convicted of any crime?</p> <p>Are any felony charges pending? Give details. (You must tell applicant a conviction is not an automatic bar to employment but is only considered as fitness for job performance.)</p>	<p>Have you ever been arrested?</p> <p>Have you ever been charged with any crime?</p>
<b>Birthplace</b>	<p>Only relevant for background check.</p>	<p>Where were you born?</p> <p>Where were your parents born?</p>
<b>Citizenship</b>	<p>Are you a US citizen?</p> <p>Do you intend to remain in the US?</p> <p>Can you submit proof of citizenship or immigration status?</p> <p>If you are not a citizen are you prevented from becoming lawfully employed because of visa or immigration status?</p>	<p>What is your country of citizenship?</p> <p>Whether or when you or family members became naturalized citizens.</p> <p>To submit a copy of your naturalization papers.</p>
<b>Credit Rating</b>	<p>Can you be bonded? Only if job related.</p>	<p>Questions about credit rating, charge accounts, ownership of car, etc.</p>
<b>Disabilities &amp; Health</b>	<p>Are you capable of performing the essential tasks and duties of the position as they have been explained to you?</p>	<p>Are you handicapped?</p> <p>Do you have a disability?</p> <p>Have you ever been treated for any of the following illnesses...?</p> <p>Have you ever had a Worker's Compensation claim?</p>
<b>Education</b>	<p>Describe your academic, vocational or professional education.</p> <p>Please list the schools you've attended.</p> <p>What is the highest grade you completed?</p>	<p>List the dates you attended or graduated from high school or college. (Some employment applications may ask for attendance dates to account for employment gaps.)</p>
<b>Emergency Contact</b>	<p>Name and address of a person to be notified in case of emergency</p>	<p>Name and address of a relative to be notified in case of emergency.</p>

CATEGORY	OK TO ASK	DO NOT ASK
<b>Handicaps</b>	Describe or demonstrate the job function and ask whether the applicant can perform the function with or without reasonable accommodation. If asked, must be asked of every applicant.	General questions about whether they are handicapped or the nature or severity of their handicaps
<b>Height &amp; Weight</b>		What is your height and / or weight?
<b>Marital &amp; Family Status</b>	Name and address of parent or guardian only if applicant is a minor.  Are there any activities, commitments or responsibilities that may hinder the work attendance requirements?	Marital status: spouse's name, employment, etc. Maiden name. Preference among Ms., Miss, or Mrs. Are you pregnant? Do you expect to be pregnant within the year? Do you live with your parents? With whom do you reside? Number & age of children, or intent to have children. About child care arrangements.
<b>Military Record</b>	Are you a veteran of the US Armed Forces or State Militia?  If yes, describe any training or education received while in the military.	Type, conditions or dates of military discharge or about experiences in other the US Armed Forces or State Militia.
<b>Name</b>	Have you worked for this company under a different name?  Does this company need any additional information about a change of name, use of an assumed name or nickname to check your work record?	Any inquiries that would indicate marital status, maiden name, ancestry, national origin.  Has your original name been legally changed?  Inquiries about preferred courtesy title: Miss, Mrs., Ms.
<b>National Origin &amp; Language</b>	What languages do you read, speak or write fluently? Only if job related.	Ancestry, lineage, national origin, descent, parentage or nationality.  Nationality of parents or spouse.  Native language and how acquired proficiency.

<b>CATEGORY</b>	<b>OK TO ASK</b>	<b>DO NOT ASK</b>
<b>Organizations</b>	List memberships in any professional or trade organizations or other organizations that you consider relevant to your ability to perform the job.  What office, if any, do or did you hold?  Inquiry into any organization that the applicant is a member only if providing the name does not reveal race, religion or ancestry.	List any or all social organizations, clubs, societies, and lodges to which you belong.
<b>Photographs</b>	May inform that a photograph may be required after hire only if job related.	Submit a photograph with application or before hire. Can only request after hiring.
<b>Race &amp; Color</b>		Race, complexion, color of hair, eyes or skin.
<b>Religion &amp; Creed</b>	Are you available to work Saturdays or Sundays if needed? Only if job related.	Religious affiliation, denomination, church, parish, pastor, minister or rabbi, religious holidays observed.
<b>Relatives</b>	Do you have any relatives already employed by this company? If yes, please list their names.	List names and addresses of relative(s) to be contacted in case of emergency.
<b>References</b>	Name of persons willing to provide professional or character references for you.  Who referred you here?	What is the name of your pastor, minister or rabbi?
<b>Residence</b>	What is your current address?  How long have you resided at that address?  What was your former address and how long did you reside there? Only for background checks.	Do you own or rent?  Can you give the names and relationships of the persons residing with you?
<b>Sex</b>	Only permissible where a Bona Fide Occupational Qualification exists.	Are you male or female? Any inquiry related to sex or ability to reproduce. Any inquiry related to sexual preference.



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