

Before lawn care, I worked as the employment manager at an automotive body plant in eastern Indiana for four years. One of my responsibilities was to hire a large number of seasonal workers for the busy summer months.

This experience taught me one valuable lesson: the most important interview you, as an employer, will ever conduct is the one you have with a prospective employee. Why? Because learning as much about the person before you hire them may save you a great deal of headaches.

Here are some practical hints on properly conducting an employment interview.

(1) Know what you are hiring for. Sounds silly, but do you actually have a written job description for the job in question? Having one, with specific duties and requirements listed, makes the interview fair to both you and the candidate. Here is what this job entails. How do your qualifications match the job? After reviewing the job requirements, do you still feel this is something you would like to do?

Having a written job description may save both of you a great deal of hassle later on because it clearly states what the perspective employee will be expected to do.

(2) Review the application or resume thoroughly before conducting the interview. Understand certain things about them that can help you make a better decision about the prospect.

Are there unexplained gaps in the employee's work history? Pay particular attention to times when the individual was self employed. What were they doing? Does the resume show a string of short-term jobs? Why? Don't rely on a resume alone. Require the applicant to complete an application and have them do so on your premises.

(3) Give the candidate the full attention he or she deserves during the interview process. Conduct it in private and do not allow yourself to be

interrupted during the interview. Give the candidate your full and undivided attention.

(4) Make every effort to learn as much about them as possible. Get them to talk. One of the biggest mistakes an employer can make is to spend the entire interview talking to the candidate instead of listening to the candidate.

Ask questions like: What did you like best about your last job? What are your hobbies or outside interests? What attracted you to our company? Do you enjoy working with customers? What are your career objectives?

(5) Be up front about conditions of employment. Make sure the candidate knows if an offer for employment is subject to such things as reference checks, drug screening, passing certification, and signing a non-compete agreement.

(6) After the interview, make notes at once. This is vital if you are interviewing several candidates one right after the other. Perhaps a check list would be helpful where you could rate the candidate on appearance, verbal skills, attitude, or other factors which you found distinguishing. Attach such a list to the application for later review.

(7) Avoid on-the-spot hiring. Panic hiring is almost always a disaster. Review the application, resume and interview notes. If applicable, discuss the results with others in your company who may supervise or otherwise deal with the new employee. They may see things that you have missed. Check any and all references or job information legally permissible. Even if it's just a day or two, take your time. Remember, a new employee may end up staying with you for several years.

Typically, the easiest vacancy to fill is at the entry level, but keep Personnel Management Rule #1 in mind: promote from within and employ from without. □

7 tips for better hiring



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