



27 TOP TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE INTERVIEWS

Successful recruiting requires a careful assessment of the CV or application form, probing in the interview using relevant fact-based questioning techniques and then taking a step back to weigh up personal qualities.

LOOK BEHIND THE CV

1. **Layout** – is it tidy and accurate suggesting attention to detail and an organised mind or is it crammed and untidy suggesting a chaotic mind?
2. **Chronology** – look out for gaps. What were they doing? eg 2001 – 2004 could be simply Jan 01 to Dec 04 or may be Dec 01 to Jan 04!
3. **Language** – has the candidate used the latest “in vogue” management speak or bland all-encompassing words showing no individualism or originality of thought? Weak words might include: “involved in”, “part of”, “liaised with”. Strong words might include: “managed”, “handled”, “led”.
4. **Achievements** – what has this particular candidate actually achieved in this role rather than a list of the tasks involved in carrying out the role?
5. **Order of Information** – Which information is given first or last? It's human nature to try to hide the least impressive which will probably be given last.
6. **Inconsistencies** – Does the candidate give assertions in the covering letter that fail to tie up with the information given in the CV? Does the job title match the job description?
7. **Interests** – What information is given about the personality? Anyone can join a club, have the membership card in their wallet and sit at home watching TV. You're looking for evidence of active participation within the club – someone who gets up and goes.
8. **Exaggeration/Stretching the Truth** – many candidates these days are taking advice on how to best “market” themselves. Watch out for over-stated achievements using words like “top” or “best”.
9. **Forensic Skills** – with statistics suggesting a high proportion of candidates lie in their CV's, hone your forensic skills so that you can spot these quickly.

PREPARE AN EFFECTIVE INTERVIEW

10. **Interview not Interrogation** – reeling off a raft of questions machine-gun style is not an interview but more an interrogation. You'll end up no wiser.
11. **Two-Way Appraisal** – the candidate needs to find out as much about you and your company as you do about them. Look at the time spent as a mutual business opportunity.
12. **Achievement** – probe for quantifiable contribution made in a previous role. *“What's the most significant impact you've made during the last twelve months within your current organisation?”*
13. **Approach to Work** - Do they centre on the procedure of how something is done or are they smart and centre on the results achieved? *“What do you find is the best way to get things done?”*
14. **Initiative** – particularly in a management role, you need to find someone who makes things happen of their own accord rather than someone who needs to be told what to do each step of the way. *“What projects or activities has your team undertaken and seen through that were your own idea?” “What role did you play in making sure they worked?”*

15. **Social Skills** – do they have any? Look out for a general ability to get on well with people and avoid the short fuse or the puffed up ego. *“James Smith gets very uptight leading up to deadlines. How would you handle him?”*
16. **Perseverance** – seek out staying power rather than someone who falls at the first jump. *“What has been your most challenging project? What difficulties did you meet? How did you overcome them?”*
17. **Balance** – look out for the workaholic, all work and no play or perhaps worse still, all play and no work! Probe outside interests. *“What outside activities do you enjoy and why?”*
18. **Weaknesses** – we all have them and it’s a strength to recognise your own. *“Can you tell me about your biggest failures and how you dealt with them?”*
19. **Values** – try to find the right cultural fit and be sure the job fits their underlying needs. *“Someday in the future you’ll be looking back and assessing your life. What will be your criteria?”*
20. **Motivation** – what is it that makes this person tick? Is it money, status, autonomy..... *“Why are you interested in this particular role? Why did you do that?”*

COMMON CLANGERS TO AVOID

21. **Going with “Gut Feel”** – whether you call it hunch, instinct or chemistry, don’t let reason and logic go right out of the window just because you take a shine to someone.
22. **Winging It** – Preparation and planning is the key. Understand the role, know what you are looking for, do your homework on the CV, make them want to work for you and your organisation.
23. **Talking Too Much** – you have two ears and one mouth – use them in that proportion. You want to persuade the candidate, put them at their ease, present the company or puff up the job – as a result you talk yourself into employing someone you know nothing about.
24. **Making It a One-Way Street** – fail to give the candidate sufficient opportunity to find out about you and the organisation. The type of questions they ask can show you the kind of criteria they’re after in their next job.
25. **Keeping a Closed Mind** – you go in looking for “x” and your mind is closed to anything other than “x”. Don’t forget that someone with a bit of “x” plus a little “y” and that very special quality “z” could really boost your team.
26. **Miss the Signals** – you’re sticking so rigidly to your script that you fail to probe or follow-up or even notice any throw-away comment the candidate offers which tells you what makes them tick.
27. **Follow-up Quickly** – you’ve found the perfect candidate but by the time you’ve messed around consulting this person and that person and sorting out the documentation, they’ve long since been snapped up by someone else.

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PLEASE NOTE

The information set out in this document is correct at 1st February, 2010. As the legislation that applies in this article/document is general in its context, your specific circumstances may require tailored advice for it to be effective. If in doubt, contact Crispin Rhodes on 01908 230969 or email angela@crispinrhodes.co.uk