

Do You Hate Preparing for Interviews? These Surefire Preparation Tips Will Help You Win The Top Candidate - By Dan Kutis

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Thorough interview preparation is one of the most important aspects of successful hiring. Even busy managers can increase their company's recruiting power and differentiate themselves by diligently following a preparation checklist.

Preparing the Candidate

The pre-interview stage should be a multi-step process. I prefer to hold two phone conversations with each candidate before we meet in person.

During the first call, my objective is to provide information and build rapport. I introduce myself, describe my position and role with the Hamister team, and establish the purpose of my call. I also give a brief overview of The Hamister Group, Inc., its business sectors, and history. While discussing the position in question, I gauge the candidate's interest and advise her to have a look at our website.

The second call is my opportunity to ask a few preliminary questions and gain a general impression of the candidate. Did he look over the website? What did she like about our team? Can he discuss any of our articles with me? What did she think of our company values? Before proceeding to the next step, I need to see evidence of research and a connection with our culture.

Preparing Myself

By the time I set up an in-person interview, the candidate and I have already set the foundation for a warm conversation. I know that he understands the basics of the position and we have both considered whether The Hamister Group is a good fit for him.

Whenever appropriate, I email our application and additional background documents before the interview. I hate arriving at an interview and being asked to sit down and fill out forms for 30 minutes before the actual meeting. It's a real energy drain. If you don't want to make candidates feel like they're waiting for a medical appointment, it's best to send the paperwork ahead of time. And, if they don't arrive with the documents already completed, you get a few more clues about their level of professionalism.

Candidates who have invested time in the interview process deserve an equal effort from the hiring company. While most managers take just a few minutes to look over a candidate's resume before the initial interview, I perform serious due diligence. A good hiring manager can put the resume aside and discuss the candidate's background from memory. Just as an interviewee does not make a good impression when she brings notes to the interview, hiring managers can weaken their position by consulting resumes frequently.

It is also important to research the companies at which the candidate has worked previously. Instead of asking, 'what are these companies and what do they do?' (which does not make me look like the smartest guy in the world), I show a solid understanding of the person's background. This creates a strong, unique impression.

Show Time

In addition to intellectual readiness, interviewers must also pay attention to some physical details. First, the obvious: tell your receptionist to hold your calls and turn the flipping cell phone OFF. And the email, and the blackberry, and the pager, and any other technological wonder that can interrupt the interview and distract you from the most important person in the world: the candidate. Yes, during an interview, the person in front of you must be the center of your universe (and hopefully my wife won't read this).

You need to show candidates their significance in every way possible, including your attire. Wear your Sunday best, no matter what you usually wear in the workplace, and even if it's 110 degrees outside. Men, please: ties and jackets. Ladies, please: blazers. If you normally wear a branded shirt, change for the interview. You don't make a good impression when the candidate is dressed better than you are.

Be punctual. An interview that is scheduled for 11AM must begin at 11AM. If a candidate arrived 20 minutes late for an interview, you would probably cross him off your list. If you make candidates wait in the lobby for 20 minutes, they may be doing the same thing to you. Plan your schedule to accommodate unexpected events and be on time for every meeting.

And finally, breathe, smile, count to ten, and focus. It's show time.

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