

E-Tool #3 Interviewing Logistics

As an owner or manager, you've probably forgotten how nerve wracking a job interview can be. The people you're interviewing for a job in your store, however, know all about this! That's why it's so important to create a positive impression with your candidates. It puts them at ease, which encourages them to talk openly. And the more honest they are, the better an idea you'll get as to whether or not this person will be a good fit for your company.

The 12 points in the following FREE eTool – Interviewing Logistics – will help you create an interview experience that's relaxing and inviting for your applicants. Remember, good interviews produce good employees. Happy hiring!

INTERVIEWING LOGISTICS

- Set an interview time that's convenient for both of you, then be on time. If you are not, the candidate's perception will be that you're inconsiderate and might not be the kind of boss they'd want. It also suggests that tardiness is acceptable. The interview session should take place in a private environment such as a store office or in a quiet corner of a coffee shop or fast food restaurant; never interview the candidate while you're working or with customers present. This detracts from the privacy and the applicant's subsequent openness.
- Be prepared and organized. Specifically, you need to have a list of prepared questions ready to ask. (Use the question grid suggested later in the interview section of this book.) Compile a clear list detailing the benefits offered by your store or company, the responsibilities of the job being applied for and the range of pay being offered. This way, you'll be prepared should the interview generate your interest to make an immediate job offer.
- Nearly as important as the right questions to ask is your readiness with the reasons someone would want to work for you. However, don't start a lot of selling until you are confident that the applicant has both the level of competence you are looking for and the perceived level of compatibility you need for the team.
- Soon after the applicant arrives, tell store employees that you are to have total privacy, which includes no telephone calls. Make sure this is done within the presence of the applicant. Although somewhat staged, this subtly conveys to the applicant that the interview is important.
- Offer a beverage such as water, soda or coffee. If they accept, you should join them. This puts both of you on the same level and helps the applicant relax. Never smoke in front of a candidate nor offer food, as it's too time-consuming and distracting.
- Don't try to be too formal, as this tends to intimidate applicants. Use words that easily convey your thoughts and questions and avoid using trick or stressful questions. Also, remove formal barriers between you and the candidate, such as desks or conference tables. These can be seen as symbols of authority and will create the impression that the applicant is being judged, which is not conducive to their openness.
- As you ask your questions, avoid leading the applicant by first stating your opinions. When you do this, applicants will quickly adjust their opinions to match yours, telling you what you want to hear. For example, "Don't you agree that customer service is the most important duty of any worker in a retail store?" Of course they're going to say "Yes."

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- Ask the applicant whether or not you can take notes. Explain that you want to be sure to remember as much of the interview as possible, and notes help you avoid confusing them with other applicants. When they've given permission – as they most likely will – be certain to take them. If they say “no,” then comply with their wishes. Keep in mind, however, that this reaction can indicate an unwillingness to be open or that the applicant lacks confidence or comfort with the interview.
- Present your questions in an open-ended style, which forces the applicant to elaborate. Questions that can be answered with a simple “yes” or “no” won't tell you the why, when or how that you need to know. An open-ended question could be, “What did you like best about your previous jobs?” When the applicant answers, you can choose to stay on that particular subject and ask for more details. This is called “probing,” and it often reveals many more details of their work and personal values.
- When you ask difficult questions, be sure to pause and give applicants time to answer. Your silence should be a cue that you want more discussion. Your goal is to have them doing more than two thirds of the talking and for you to do most of the listening. This will give them a more favorable view of the interview and more importantly, will collect the information you need to make a decision on their candidacy.
- Use the interview-question list for recording the applicant's answers and your reactions. Don't be too obvious and overreact to comments that you might consider controversial. You want them to continue to be honest and candid.
- Try not to schedule a series of interviews without giving yourself at least a 20-minute break in between each. This will give you the time to reflect on each candidate and compile your notes. Also, as a store manager, you might need some time to handle problems with store operations that can't wait until all interviews are completed.