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7 common interview mistakes (and how to avoid them)

Interviews are one of the last hurdles of the long recruitment process but the stage most prone to error and costly mistakes.

As Claire Flaherty, Director at Copper Road Consulting points out “interviewers are in somewhat of a position of power during the interview process and it’s very important this power isn’t exploited, both in terms of how you conduct the interview and how you interact with candidates.”

Fail to keep the balance in check and you could find yourself losing out on the top talent, so if you want to strike the right chord avoid these seven common interview errors.

1. Being late

“Being late is not a great first impression when you’re looking to attract the best talent, not push them away,” says Greg Kouwiloyan, a director at Method Recruitment Group, as it can add undue pressure and negatively impact a person’s performance.

Given that candidates often step out from their current job to sit for an interview, it is vital that you set an interview time and stick to it. If you are interviewing multiple candidates in a row, factor in the possibility of going over time and build this into your scheduling.

Being prompt creates an atmosphere of mutual respect and sets the tone for a positive candidate experience.

2. Being under-prepared

Not having read a resume before an interview is a huge red flag for many job seekers as it shows you haven’t valued the time they’ve dedicated to the process or worse, that you’re disinterested.

Having a methodical read of a resume not only “helps you to identify any concerns but also allows you to formulate specific questions around a

candidate's suitability and background designed to get the most out of them during the interview," Flaherty adds.

It also gives candidates a positive insight into the culture of your business.

3. Focussing too much on skills & experience

While it is important (and in some cases crucial) to extract how a candidate's skills and experience will benefit the role, according to Flaherty, "the best interviews will ask a mixture of both technical and behavioural-based questions to really determine a candidate's suitability."

What some lack in skills and experience they make up for in commitment and cultural contribution, so this approach allows you to explore a candidate's fit with your business and whether they can grow into the role over time.

4. Throwing curveballs

While some people argue that curveball questions "help you separate the wheat from the chaff", Kouwiloyan believes that "no one is actually interested in the answers to these types of questions." While they can sometimes showcase problem-solving skills, they generally just confuse candidates and steer them off track.

In this regard, you should develop questions that are based on the selection criteria for the job at hand and allow prospective hires the chance to show what they can offer.

5. Dominating the conversation

An interview is a two-way street so not inviting candidates to ask you questions is a big recruitment faux pas.

Candidates should be encouraged to talk about 80% of the time which, Flaherty believes "helps hirers to gauge their level of interest, how inquisitive they are and their ability to question and process information."

6. Drawing the process out

Transparency around timelines is key, especially for strong candidates who will invariably receive multiple offers. Be sure to communicate how many stages

there are before a potential offer is made, whether any testing is required and what the reference checking processes are. This way a candidate can “map out how long the process will take and weigh this alongside other prospective offers,” Kouwiloyan says.

7. Underselling your organisation

An interview is an opportune time for you to position your organisation and your team, so it is important that you highlight key attractions of the role not focus too much on evaluation. This is particularly pertinent for competitive roles and in instances where candidates have multiple offers.

As Kouwiloyan aptly concludes “recruitment is a craft, not a pre-defined one-size-fits-all process” so try and tailor your approach to each person and build a relationship with them so they can see the value of being a part of your organisation.