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THE EMOTIONALLY INTELLIGENT INTERVIEW

A “CAREER-COACHING” APPROACH TO GETTING INSIDE CANDIDATES’ HEARTS AND HEADS



As mentioned, many employers jump into an interview prematurely: “Tell me about yourself . . .” followed immediately by “Give me an example of when you’ve . . .” With that, they’re off and running into the formal question-and-answer paradigm of so many interviews. The relationship isn’t quite ready for that yet. A more practical and wiser way of approaching candidates focuses on candidates’ career needs and aspirations. Get them talking about themselves in light of their longer-term career planning goals, and you’ll have a much more meaningful initial exchange of information—even with someone whom you’re meeting for the first time.



This is a “career-coaching,” emotionally intelligent approach to evaluating job applicants because it initially places their needs ahead of your own. It’s a road map for building immediate rapport and goodwill and for turning interviewing into a more open and honest dialogue that focuses just as much on the candidate’s needs as on the needs of your company. After all, by the time candidates come in to interview, you’ve already determined that they meet the technical requirements of the position you’re seeking to fill. What will help you distinguish the most suitable individual for your organization will

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ultimately be based on a personality match, natural rapport, and a compatible business style that complement your organization's culture and unique personality.

Similar to icebreakers or your telephone screen, ask again:

Tell me again about your job search: Why are you in job search mode right now, and what's most important to you at this point in your career?

Remind me again what appealed to you when you immediately saw our job posting?

What are the two or three criteria that are most important to you at this point in your career in terms of exciting and motivating you to say yes to an employment offer?

For employed candidates who may be considering a lateral move into your organization, ask:

What would need to change at your current organization for you to consider remaining with them?

Have you openly shared your concerns with your current employer, and are they aware that you're actively interviewing? Would it surprise them to find that out?

For unemployed candidates in career transition, you might want to try questions like these:

What's been your approach to your job search up to now? How have you gone about researching the job market and what have you found?

What guidance or advice would you share with others in career transition relative to job searching in this market?

Ultimately, at some point toward the end of the interview, you might want to ask:

If you were to accept this position, how would you explain that to a prospective employer five years from now? In other words, how would this job provide a link in your future career progression?

You're asking candidates to articulate what's driving their need to change companies, what's important at this point in their career, and why your organization makes sense in terms of building their career and resume. Most candidates will appreciate your transparency.

Similar questions that might fit well, for example, might include:

What three criteria are most important to you in selecting your next opportunity?

Typically, the three most important elements when selecting a new company are the industry, company, and the people you'll be working with: Which of those three is most significant to you now?

What are the top three companies (besides us) that you would pursue right now if you could, and what position or title would you pursue in those companies?

When you researched us, what made us stand out in your mind, and what do you picture the role you're applying for looking like in an organization like ours?

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Candidates may be a little thrown off by such questions because they may never have been asked to articulate those considerations to a prospective employer in such detail, but it will open the door to the bonding relationship you're looking to develop. Candidates will walk away thinking, "Wow, I've never interviewed with a company that took such a strong interest in me and my own career needs like that. They really forced me to think this move through, and if they put candidates' needs first, they probably do that for their employees as well." In short, forcing career introspection builds goodwill and trust early on. In a way, it introduces career and professional development discussions into the first interview, which is a healthy way to start any professional relationship—and set your expectations for intermittent (i.e., quarterly) performance check-ins and goal reviews. It's amazing what a difference two or three well-situated questions can do to build rapport and trust, even in a brand-new relationship. And to think you're only eight minutes into the interview!