Conducting the Interview

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Greeting

- Begin by setting the job candidate at ease. Remember, the more at ease the candidate feels, the more likely it is that you'll really be able to get a clear picture of the candidates knowledge, skills and abilities.
- Welcome the candidate to the interview and thank him/her for expressing interest in working for the agency.
- Introduce the candidate to members of the **panel.** You might want to have each panelist greet the candidate and state their name / position.

Introduction

- The hiring official should then briefly let the candidate know how the interview will be conducted (that the entire panel will participate in asking questions and recording answers, that in some instances you may be inquiring about their **past experience** rather than seeking **hypothetical responses,** etc.)
- Include the interview timeframe, so that the candidate knows what is to be expected. It might be helpful to give an idea of the maximum amount of time the candidate might spend on each question.
- It has been helpful in the past to appoint a timekeeper among the panelists, who will signal to the job candidate when they come close to the maximum time allotment.
- Here is an example script of what might be said to conduct the introduction of a job interview:

"Tamara, just to let you know how today's interview will be conducted, we have prepared 5 questions for you and we will each take turns asking the questions. We will be writing down your responses, but feel free to speak at a normal speed. Just don't be alarmed when we don't give a lot of eye contact. You will have 20 minutes to complete the interview, which is roughly 4 minutes per question. Robert will give you a signal when you have 3 minutes left, and another signal when only 1 minute is left. Do you have any questions for us before we begin?"

Keep on Track

- Hiring officials need to exercise skill in keeping the interview headed in the right direction. Normally, intervention is not needed. However, it is not unusual for a job candidate to be confused or overly nervous. The following situations may arise:

  - Job candidate does not answer multiple parts to a question.
  - Job candidate begins to answer **hypothetically** ("Well, what I **would** do is...") to a **behavioral** question ("What **have** you done...")
  - Job candidate seems to be rambling on an unrelated subject

In these instances, the hiring official may find it appropriate to intervene by thanking the candidate for responses given so far, or briefly restating the most recent response, and then reminding the candidate to answer both parts of the question, to give specific examples of past experiences rather than a hypothetical response, or bringing up the question topic again to steer the candidate back on subject.

*Example: "John, if you'll excuse the interruption, I think you've given me a clear example of what you **would** do with a difficult customer. Can you think of a time you **did** deal with a difficult customer, and how you dealt with it?"*

Example: "Lydia, I appreciate that response to what your role was on a team. Could you now tell me whether or not you thought the team was successful, and why?"

- Occasionally, job candidates have been known to share inappropriate information that is not job related during an interview (i.e., details about a disability, pregnancy, religion, arrest record, marital status, etc.).
  - Should such a situation arise, the hiring official should immediately (and as politely as possible) interrupt to steer the discussion back on the job related topic.
  - It would be wise to inform the applicant that the information volunteered will not be documented in interview notes or used as part of the basis for scoring.
  - Example:

    Hiring official: Tell me about a time when you went above and beyond the call of duty to provide excellent customer service.

    Candidate: (thinks for a moment) Well, there was a time just a couple of weeks ago at Key Bank. I had just found out I was pregnant so I was very emotional that day, and you know how you just feel like you want to lose your lunch when you're pregnant and stressed out at the same time..."

    Hiring Official: "Carmen, please excuse my interruption, but I need to let you know I have an obligation to keep our discussion during this interview completely job related. You've just shared with us information about your pregnancy and I want to make it clear that this information will not be documented on our interview notes, or used against you in any way as far as a hiring decision is concerned. Now, I understand you weren't feeling well that day at Key Bank, how did you go above and beyond the call of duty in providing excellent customer service that day?"

Avoid Prompting

- Always give the job candidate time to formulate a response after an interview question has been given.
- Avoid the "For instance" pitfall. Some hiring officials are bothered by a few seconds of silence while the job candidate formulates a response, so they offer an example of what they are looking for to break the silence. **This defeats the purpose of the interview.**

  Example: "Describe a time you dealt with a difficult customer." (Candidate thinks silently for a few seconds, then the hiring official pipes in.) "For instance, can you think of a time when you calmed down an angry customer at your previous job with Convergys, and avoided the call going to your supervisor?"

Summarize

- Allow time at the end of the interview for the job candidate to ask the panel any questions.

- Let the candidate know of post-interview expectations, such as timeframes for a decision to be reached, background checks, etc.
- Collect any interview materials such as his/her copy of the questions, the signed **Reference Release** form, etc.
- Thank the candidate again for expressing their interest in the position and for taking time for you to get to know them better, and escort him/her from the interview room.

Scoring

- Score the candidate's responses by comparing them to the **criteria** established beforehand.
- It is best to do this after the job candidate has left the room, but before the next job candidate enters, so that the responses are still fresh in your memory.