



## **Interviewing and Onboarding Virtually**

Hiring is one of the most important tasks a supervisor must complete. It is also one of the most challenging. You hire the right person and things will be great. You hire the wrong person and things could be miserable. In research by Dr. John Sullivan in April of 2017, he revealed that almost 50% of new hires aren't successful. So why do supervisors make bad hires? In our experiences with Center supervisors, the number one reason they make bad hires is out of desperation. They have a vacancy and services still need to be provided. It's much better to take the time up-front to find a candidate that truly fits rather than making a quick hire out of desperation. The pandemic has added to the difficulty of making good hiring choices and onboarding successfully. Some supervisors over the past couple of years have completed the interview process entirely virtually.

Although there is no 100% full proof method of making the perfect hire, there are some techniques to help supervisors make better choices in the hiring process and onboarding new employees.

During the hiring process, there are some best practices to consider pre-interview, during the interview and post-interview.

### **Pre-interview**

Prepare your interview questions in advance. Review the job description and make sure it is current. Human Resources can help with this. Identify success criteria which include employee traits, knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to be successful in the position. Develop behavioral questions based on your identified success criteria. Behavioral questions are the best practice. Past performance is the best indicator of future performance.

Embrace technology. Understand your software and use it appropriately. Whether it be Zoom, WebEx, or Microsoft Teams you need to master the technology before the interview. Follow Webcam best practices:

- Dress comfortably, but wear pants!
- Center yourself in the webcam viewer.
- Some light in the front is better than light from the back.
- Don't get too close to the camera.
- Look behind you. What is behind you is what others can see.
- Don't eat or chew gum while on the webcam or phone.
- Practice looking and speaking into the webcam. That is how you connect with others.
- You may want to record yourself for a trial run.

Schedule a pre-interview meeting to make sure the interviewing team is prepared. During this meeting, you can review the resume/application, establish roles, make question

assignments, and review proper interview etiquette including legal information. You also want to prep the candidates as they may be unfamiliar with the technology. Be prepared for hiccups because they will happen.

Predetermine success criteria and phone screen your applicants. Phone screens are a very good way to prescreen candidates before scheduling the interview. During the phone screen, which shouldn't take more than 15 - 20 minutes, you can review the position functions, clarify expectations, clear up any uncertainties from the resume/application, discuss salary range, and answer any questions the candidate might have. Inform them of the interview process, timelines, and those candidates that are selected will be called back for an interview. Be prepared to decide whether the candidate meets your criteria and if you will move forward with scheduling the interview.

### **During the Interview**

Make sure the interview team is dressed professionally. When the candidate arrives, in person or virtually, make sure they feel welcome. Introduce them to the interview team and review the interview process again. Discuss the Center's culture, mission, and values. Treat virtual interviews as regular, in-person interviews but pay attention to virtual best practices.

Don't rush the process. Make sure that the questions are the same for each candidate. Know what you're looking for. Which criteria do you want to assess during the interview? Which criteria carry the most weight? Take turns asking assigned questions, give the candidate adequate time to respond, and document responses.

Stick to your schedule. Monitor the time and make sure there are about 10 minutes available at the end for candidate questions.

### **Post Interview**

Provide the candidate with information about what to expect going forward, especially if you plan on conducting a second-round interview or need to schedule a skills test. After the candidate leaves the virtual meeting have the interview team stay in the meeting to review their notes and share their thoughts on the candidate. Communicate this to the interview team in advance so they know to stay in the meeting following the interview.

During the process of interviewing multiple candidates, make sure you keep engaged candidates that you've already interviewed. Remember they are probably interviewing at other employers. After the second-round interviews and/or skills tests, be prepared to select a "first choice" and "second choice" candidate. The "second choice" candidate is just in case something doesn't work out with the "first choice."

When a candidate accepts and you agree on a start date, develop an onboarding plan.

### **Onboarding**

Hiring managers celebrate when their number one candidate accepts the offer and a start date is established. They often feel like the job is done but actually, it's just getting started.

Usually, a new hire will need to give two weeks' notice. This interim time is critical in helping the employee feel welcome and prepared. Communicate the onboarding plan/schedule as soon as you can. Periodically check-in on the new hire to see if they have any questions to build rapport. Let them know about any pre-hire activities they must complete before their start date. Make sure you follow all of your Center's hiring policies and practices. You need to ensure all of the requirements are complete so that all of their employee resources and equipment will be available on their first day of employment.

On their first day help them "settle in." Make sure all of their equipment arrived and is functioning properly. Schedule a virtual welcome with coworkers and staff. Send them Center logo items (swag) to include a Center shirt if available. Help build their network by scheduling 1:1 meetings with the key staff they will be interacting with or that can provide information about various services your team provides. Assign a coworker mentor to guide them through their first couple of weeks. It is suggested that you solicit help from your best employee so they can observe high performance. Also, allow them some free time to take care of any Human Resources related activities.

Start building the manager and staff rapport by meeting 1:1 to discuss essential functions and expectations. During this meeting, you can set goals (30/60/90 days) and provide feedback. Schedule self-directed and self-paced on-boarding activities. Communicate your schedule and availability. Don't forget to check-in on them formally and informally. Hopefully, at some point, you will be able to meet face-to-face and celebrate by taking them to lunch.

Providing a great hiring and onboarding experience for your new employees will increase their chances to be successful in their new position and help to ensure great services are provided.