

The 5 Must-Dos for Interviewers of Today

THOUGHT PAPER

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Finding the right talent for your organization plays an irreplaceable role in its success. However, the process involves more than just finding a ‘good-looking’ CV and conducting a few rounds of interviews. Given today’s market dynamics, it is important to remember that while, as employers, we believe that we are selecting a candidate, it is also a case of the candidate choosing us. This makes interviews all the more important.

Interviewing is like a courtship dance that both parties need to be equally enthusiastic about and ideally, participate in with the same energy and intent.

As an interviewer, you must remember that the way you come across during an interview directly impacts how a candidate views the organization, its culture, and values. Needless to say, your first impression needs to be good! How can you ensure that? Here are 5 must-dos for every interviewer:

1. Be Prepared and Punctual

Being prepared for an interview is not just a candidate’s responsibility. In order for you to do justice to your organization and the candidate, you must always be prepared for the interview too. Before you interview your candidate, make sure that you have:

- All the information you need about the expectations/KRAs/KPIs of the role you are hiring for
- Gone through any feedback that is available from (if any) previous rounds
- Studied and not just sifted through the CV
- Built a set of specific questions based on their CV, experience, declared skill sets, etc.

These simple steps can help you have a meaningful conversation with the candidate and build a better candidate experience.

Another big piece of the candidate experience puzzle is showing respect. Ensure that once you confirm a time slot for your discussion, you commit to it. Choose a time that suits both, you and the candidate and stick to it. In case you are running late due to unavoidable circumstances, it is important that you call the interviewee and reschedule. While demonstrating respect for individuals is important in every setting, in the organizational context its value multiples.

2. Listen to their story

A typical job interview often follows a predictable choreography. Engage in some small talk, followed by standard questions like, “tell us about yourself.”, “where do you see yourself five years from now?” Our advice? Avoid the stereotypes.

Every person has a story about how their career journey has been so far, where they want it to be headed, and what purpose drives them. Listening to these stories can give you deeper insights about the candidate - something you won’t find in a traditional CV. Listening to your candidate’s story can help you identify key traits that will add value to your organization. In this case, listening will help you see whether the candidate is a good culture fit, what individual purpose drives them, and how aligned are they with the values of the organizations.

3. Make it a big deal

Every interview is also a piece of marketing. As a representative of the organization, you need to show, and not just tell, prospective employees why they should choose your company. In doing so, your enthusiasm can be infectious and inspiring. Remember, in an interview, you are the brand ambassador for your organization. While you focus on hiring the right talent, you also need to pay attention to creating an honest and inviting environment for your candidate. Be prepared to answer questions that will help the candidate evaluate the organization.

Keep in mind that your candidate, just like you, is exploring other avenues and meeting different people. It is up to you to create a lasting impact.

4. Look for potential, not just performance.

There are countless situations where a person has been hired based on their exemplary performance in a previous role. However, what many interviewers tend to overlook is that past performance, regardless of how commendable it may be, does not imply a good fit for your organization. Every organization, every team, every culture is unique and so are the challenges facing them. When hiring, you must take all these factors into account and focus on finding the right candidate, not just the best-performing one.

Alternatively, there could be instances where a candidate’s past performance is not exceptional because they weren’t provided with the right opportunities to excel in their previous organization. As an interviewer, you need to reflect on what would change if you were to present them with those opportunities. You must look for potential and not just performance.

5. The Golden Rule: Treat them the way you would like to be treated.

Last on the list is something you may have heard while growing up. ‘Treat others the way you would want them to treat you’.

Remember, the interview might be a stressful situation for the candidate to be in. They could be introverts or someone who is nervous about navigating the virtual setting. As an interviewer and a host, it is your responsibility to make the setting warm and personal. Be sensitive to the applicants' needs or possible anxieties. Take tips from some of the best services you have experienced elsewhere and apply them to your interview. Show them that you understand their position, allow them the time and space to settle in, engage in easy-going conversations that might soothe the nerves and help them perform better during the interview.

The Effort Is Worth It

Building a better candidate experience during an interview is a matter of commitment and focus, and it can pay large dividends to your team and organization. Like your current employees, applicants can also play a key role in building your company's reputation. The stories they share can help build or break your brand. Therefore, you want to ensure that the story they tell about your company is a good one! Building a positive experience for them is a simple way of making that happen.

About the Author



Mainak brings over 24 years of experience spanning business and HR roles across geographies. This has given him a unique understanding of the link between HR and business strategy. He also holds a patent for HR capability development.

Mainak's experience includes human capital strategy, culture, talent development (performance, leadership development, career pathing, competency, learning, engagement, diversity) and talent acquisition (including on-boarding and background check). He has also implemented HRIS platform and HR metrics to improve performance.

Recently he has been helping start-ups set up efficient and effective HR teams and processes. In addition, Mainak is a recognized Executive Coach and Leadership Development expert.

Mainak's previous work experience includes stints/projects with Accenture (Consulting and HR), Hewitt Associates, AbsolutData, Heidrick & Struggles, Evalueserve, Sterlite Technologies and Upstox.

Mainak holds a MBA from the Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta, and is a certified executive coach.

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