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**Guidance Notes for Hiring Managers**

The recruitment and selection process is two-way: it provides a chance for candidates to decide if your company is a place where they wish to work, as well as a chance for you to select the most appropriate candidate for the job.

There is increasing competition within the marketplace nowadays, not only competing for the same business but for staff too. The market as it stands is a candidate-orientated market, meaning that they will likely have a variety of opportunities and you are interviewing also, to sell your working environment.

Unsuccessful candidates are worth spending time on. Regardless of their experience and knowledge for the particular role that they are interviewing for. They could turn out to be prospect candidates for other jobs, a competitor or someone working within your supply chain.

How you conduct your recruitment and selection process is the first impression a candidate is going to receive of your business and a relevant amount of time should be taken in order to make that first impression a good one.

**Preparation**

During the initial contact and invitation to interview, it is worthwhile sending the candidate some vital information regarding the business or directing them towards a company website/hand book etc. This will allow you to gauge the candidate’s interest in the role. It is also worth sending the candidate over some instructions or directions on how to find the building or reception area.

New members of staff coming in to a business can be disruptive (not always negative) as many small to medium size businesses will appreciate. This can be in the form of changes in culture for example; a rather cheery person tends to lift the mood of their colleagues around them.

For this reason, communication within the business is crucial to ensure all staff are aware that a potential new colleague will be in the vicinity and to make them feel at ease when they are being shown around.

Whilst doing so, ensure that candidates receive a name badge stating their name, rather than a visitor’s badge (if appropriate). This will show a prospect candidate that they are immediately valued and identifiable to those around them.

Before you are due to interview a candidate, you and any other members of staff that will be conducting the interview should have created an information pack including:

* The Job description
* Person Specification
* Application Form
* Candidate CV and covering letter (if applicable)

Before interviewing, ensure all parties have reviewed the CV of your candidate to find out why they might be a good fit for your business and what key points you would like to hear more information about.

Examples of this include:

* Qualification break down (what course units were studied)
* Job Roles and descriptions
* Job Types (full-time, part-time temporary
* Reasons for leaving previous posts
* Availability/Notice Periods
* Salary Expectations
* Key indicators on the Person Specification

The questions you ask are going to reflect your professionalism during the interview and good candidates will identify what kind of manager you are early. The more in depth questions you ask a candidate will determine the level you are going to get to know the candidate.

Before the interview takes place, ensure that the location of the interview is prepared and the interviewer(s) are available from 15 minutes before the interview has begun. It is typical to expect and interviewee to arrive several minutes early, on this occasion it is suitable to introduce the candidate to the interview location and offer any refreshments ahead of the interview start time.

**Questions and questioning style**

It is not unreasonable or unusual to ask different candidates different questions based on their application, as every candidate will have different experiences and job roles. You should not however, find yourself asking a different variety of questions dependant on any of the candidates’ sensitive information such as gender, relationships/sexuality, ethnicity etc.

If the job requirements entail irregular hours such as weekends/evenings then it is reasonable to enquire around the suitability or problems that may arise from doing so.

Your questions should include behavioural questions, i.e. questions which require the candidate to describe their past experiences rather than questions which require their thoughts on how they might respond in a given situation.

**Tips on questioning style**

* Lead candidates towards the answers you are looking for, do not let a robust questioning technique drift into bullying.
* Listen carefully to what the candidate says and allow them thinking time to respond to questions.
* Try to ensure that you are consistent with candidates and keep the same tone.
* Avoid closed questions and encourage the candidate to use examples of techniques and experiences.
* Use probing questions in order to find out more information regarding certain aspects of previous roles, for example, specific roles in their respective team.
* Communicate with your colleagues throughout ensuring all questions on each topic are answered fully and that they are happy with the answers.
* Use language carefully, especially when dealing with candidates who form a minority with respect to the department e.g. in terms of gender or ethnicity.
* Unless you are very sure of your ground, take care with humour, as much humour is based on stereotypes.

**Protected Characteristics**

At the heart of the Equality Act are 9 protected characteristics, these characteristics are what makes us all different and we need to be aware of them to ensure we do not make recruitment decisions based on any prejudice relating to an individual’s characteristics or individual circumstances.

Below is a list of the protected characteristics that are covered under the Equality Act (2010).

* Sex
* Race
* Age
* Disability
* Pregnancy/Maternity
* Marital Status
* Sexual orientation
* Gender Reassignment
* Religion or Belief (Lack of)

We all have at least 5 protected characteristics and potentially more.

* Sex – We all have a gender
* Race – We all have a race
* Age – Legislation covers all ages, we all have an age
* Marital status – We are either Single/Marries etc
* Sexual Orientation – Every individual has a sexual orientation e.g. heterosexual/Homosexual/Bisexual

It is important we all understand that legislation is there to protect the majority and not the ‘urban myth’ that simply focuses on minority. We are all protected by law.

**Do’s and Don’ts for interview questions**

As you are responsible for interviewing and making recruitment decisions, you need to ensure the questions you ask do not put yourself or the company at risk of discriminating. Below are some key points to remember;

**Don’t ask:** What country are you from? Where were you born?

**Do ask:** Are you eligible to work in the UK?

**Why:** To ensure we do not discriminate against an individual on the grounds of race. Provided the individual is eligible to work in the UK, irrelevant of where they come from.

**Don’t ask:** What religion do you practice? Which religious holidays will you want to take off?

**Do ask:** Can you work all of the days / times required for this role?

**Why:** To ensure we do not discriminate on the grounds of religion. It does not matter what religious beliefs an individual has. We only need to know they are available to work the days and times required of the job.

**Don’t ask:** How many children do you have? Do you have childcare if we need you to work overtime?

**Do ask:** Are you able to work overtime?

**Why:** To ensure we do not discriminate on the grounds of sex or marital status. We only need to know the individual is available to work at short notice and not about any childcare responsibilities / arrangements they may or may not have.

NOTE: If they say they can’t we don’t need to know and must not ask the reason why.

**Don’t ask:** We have always had a man / woman in this role, how will you handle it?

**Do ask:** What can you bring to the role?

**Why:** To ensure we do not discriminate on the grounds of sex. We should only assess the individual’s ability to do the job and their sex is irrelevant.

**Don’t ask:** How do you feel about managing men / woman?

**Do ask:** Tell me about your previous experience of managing people?

**Why:** We could be accused of discriminating on the grounds of sex. We should only assess the individual’s ability to manage people.

**Don’t ask:** How old are you?

**Do ask:** Are you over 18 years?

**Why:** To ensure we do not discriminate on the grounds of age. As long as an individual is legally old enough to do the job, we do not need to know their age.

**Don’t ask:** How long would it take you to get to work?

**Do ask:** Are you able to start at …….hrs?

**Why:** If the area they live is in a highly populated area with one type of race, it could appear we were discriminating on the grounds of race.

**Don’t ask:** How tall are you?

**Do ask:** Are you able reach shelves of x height?

**Why:** Height questions are to be avoided as we could be discriminating on the grounds of sex. As long as the candidate can perform the task required to complete the job that is all that is necessary. We should look at reasonable adjustments if applicable.

**Don’t ask:** How much do you weigh?

**Do ask:** Are you able to lift boxes up to x weight?

**Why:** Questions relating to weight should be avoided. We should only assess their ability to carry out the tasks required for the job.

This list is not exhaustive, please contact The HR Booth for more guidance on the recruitment process.

**If a candidate requires additional support**

If any candidate has declared a disability, The HR Booth will provide you with specific advice. Be aware that some candidates may not have English as their first language, so try to keep your language simple, avoid colloquialisms and local cultural references.

**References**

Depending on the stage of interview, you may have already received and conducted reference checks on the candidate. If not the interview is a strong ground to ask for referees as you can gage a reaction from the candidate as to their stronger referees.

Some companies have a policy of providing factual or “tombstone” references only, e.g. job title, start and end date of employment. Do not interpret such references as a negative reflection on the candidate.

Also, ensure that if any negative feedback received by the referee is noted and stored correctly with hard evidence to back it up otherwise it may cause further issues.

**Note taking during the interview**

It is important that each interviewer records notes on the candidate during the interview. Each individual has their own styles of recruitment and look for different key characteristics whilst interviewing.

If a candidate challenges a decision, which results in an employment tribunal, interview notes can be required as evidence in court. Notes should be kept for around 6 months after the position has been filled then be destroyed.

Notes can aid comparisons between candidates. Do not take notes that are not relevant to the job or the criteria, e.g. notes about physical appearance.

**Reaching a decision**

When all candidates have been interviewed, allow a suitable amount of time to discuss individual candidates based on their answers and the relevance they will be for the post.

When doing so please ensure that:

* You are not over-influenced by references.
* You always compare the candidate to the criteria drawn from the person specification and job description.
* You give each individual the same amount of consideration based upon their approach to the position

It is not helpful to compare candidates directly with each other, as this runs the risk of appointing the best qualified candidate but not the most suitable or in the case of a poor field, appointing a candidate who does not meet the required criteria.

When the job market is very tight, you may discover that none of the candidates meet the required criteria. In this case it is usually better in the long term to interview other acceptable candidates or re-advertise rather than appoint someone who is not capable of doing the job (despite the inevitable short term problems this will cause).

When the successful candidate has been chosen the interviewers should decide the next most suitable candidate in case the offer is declined.

**Feedback**

Feedback would normally be given by the direct line-manager for the post. We recommend that all unsuccessful candidates be offered feedback as previously mentioned, this might not be the last time you cross paths with this candidate.

If in such cases as an Internal candidate should apply and be unsuccessful the direct line manager should inform the candidate in person whether successful or not.

**Confidentiality**

Please remember that details of an individual’s performance at interview and the contents of references should all be considered as confidential.

Details should not be disclosed to or discussed with any one other than The HR Booth or interviewers. The contents of references should not be disclosed to the candidate.

**Making a job offer**

A verbal job offer from an interviewer (or The HR Booth) and a verbal acceptance constitutes a contract.

The HR Booth can then create the job offer and will agree the starting salary (liaising with the relevant parties) to ensure equality of reward across the company and issue out a contract of employment.