

"Your staff are your most valuable resource..." Whether your company employs two people or two hundred, this key item should be at the top of every manager's priority list. Yet, keeping up to date with changing employment legislation - especially with added European Community Directives - becomes more complex and costly every day. In these Fact Sheets, we have tried to provide basic guidelines and ideas to help you adapt or improve your personnel procedures. Please remember the advice given is general and not intended to be legally definitive. The Fact Sheets on various employment and human resource matters can be accessed at www.aslrecruitment.co.uk/useful-resources

INTERVIEWING

First establish the ground rules.... What are you trying to achieve?

Prior to the interview you should have made your initial selection of candidates based on what you assume to be facts in application letters, forms or CVs. In theory, such candidates will already appear to offer the necessary skills and abilities. The interview should, therefore, be an exchange of information. It will help ensure the candidate knows exactly what is on offer and help you match the theoretical ability of the candidate to your impression of the individual's practical ability. The type of job and the style of the employer will undoubtedly affect how the interview is conducted.

If you haven't already compiled a Job Description, jot down the most important requirements of the job function to be sure you cover all relevant areas of questioning. For example, a research scientist may not need to have an effervescent, out-going, gregarious nature, yet, conversely, you may not want a shy, retiring senior sales executive! The volume of candidates, number of interview stages and status of the interviewer will affect the length of the interview and what information you need to exchange. You may also need to allow time for skill testing or character profile assessment. Remember candidates may ask for access to interview notes under the Data Protection Act.

Whilst there may not be any one type of interview that is right or wrong, the following helpful hints may provide a sensible basis from which to build.

Helpful Hints

1. Prepare a Job Description or a list of the most important requirements of the job.
2. Ensure there is no discrimination. For example, you will need to consider with a disabled candidate whether the job or premises could be adapted to accommodate them.
3. Make it clear any offer is subject to the written terms and conditions of the job, details of which will be provided.
4. Introduce yourself by name and title to the candidate.
5. Your first impressions will be similar to your customers' or of the candidate's co-workers - assess any difficulties.
6. Put the applicant at ease.
7. Control the interview without dominating the candidate.
8. Ask open-ended questions. How? What? When? Why? Where? Who? Listen to the replies and observe the candidate.
9. Be positive and enthusiastic about the job function, but ensure you tell the truth.
10. Verify qualifications and carry out skill tests if appropriate.
11. Everyone has strong and weak points - attempt to establish them.
12. Search beyond the glossy CV, answers they think you want to hear and attempt to see the real individual.
13. Briefly summarise the interview to ensure candidate understands the job and you understand candidate's abilities.
14. Ascertain if the candidate is initially interested and/or whether the applicant requires further clarification or information.
15. Give the candidate your business card and determine next stage in procedure.