

## Five Keys to Successful Interviewing

### Goals

Hiring the right person makes all the difference for everyone involved in the hiring selection process. Focusing on essential interviewing skills is the key to success in hiring the right people.

Asking the right questions in interviews provides supervisors with insight beyond what appears on a candidate's resume. For example, finding out about an individual's communication style and approach to problem-solving helps supervisors select the right candidate for the right job.

### Interview Basics

1. Introduce the interviewers and their role at the University.
2. Use a mix of behavioral and basic questions (Sections 1 and 2). Questions should focus on the candidate's ability to perform the job, often reflected in their experience.
3. Know the questions that you must avoid from a legal standpoint (Section 3).
4. Ask open-ended questions to encourage communication. Questions that can be answered "yes" or "no" do not provide any insight.
5. Allow at least ten minutes for the candidate to ask questions of the committee.

### Section 1 - Behavioral Interviewing

Behavioral interviewing is a technique in which the questions asked assist the interviewer in making predictions about a potential employee's future success based on actual past behaviors. Studies have shown that past behavior is the best indicator of future behavior. Behavioral interviewing is geared to learn what an applicant has *done* in a certain situation, rather than what s/he *thinks* about that situation. Applicants who can provide concrete examples of their behavior will provide the interviewer(s) with insight into the candidates' capabilities and style, as well as a general feeling for the candidate's character. In addition, determining how they learned and what they learned while meeting the challenges of their previous assignment is also essential. If they learned from their success (or failure) and they are reflective about that learning, then they are more likely to be able to adapt their experiences to a new job opportunity.

When developing behavioral questions, think about starting with the phrase, "Tell us about a time when..." And then follow up with a question about their thoughts on the experience and how the experience has changed the way he/she would behave in the future. Consider the following topics *as they relate to the requirements of the job*:

#### Adaptability:

- Tell us about a time when you had to adjust to a colleague's working style in order to complete a project or achieve your common objectives.
- Tell us about a time when you leveraged resources in a difficult budget year.

**Analytical Skills/Problem Solving:**

- Tell us about a situation where you had to solve a difficult problem. What was the outcome?
- Tell us about a time when, coming into a new job, you joined a team with good ideas but a lack of resources. How did you apply the team's ideas? What did the team achieve?

**Communication:**

- What has been your experience in giving presentations to small and/or large groups?
- Tell us about a time when you had to communicate a change in policy or procedure.

**Creativity:**

- Tell us about a problem that you've solved in a unique or unusual way. What was the outcome? Were you satisfied with it?
- What have you learned how to do in the past year?

**Decision Making:**

- Tell us about a time when you had to make a decision without all the information you needed. How did you handle it? Were there any negative repercussions?
- Give us a specific example of a time when you participated in a decision reached collaboratively. What was your role in the process? Was the decision different than if you had made the decision unilaterally?

**Flexibility:**

- Please provide a specific example of a time when you had to conform to a policy with which you did not agree.
- What do you do when a colleague repeatedly cancels a meeting?

**Goal Setting:**

- What do you consider to be your greatest career achievement so far, and why?
- Please describe a business goal that you set that you did not reach. What steps did you take? What obstacles did you encounter?

**Initiative:**

- What has been your best or most creative idea during your career? How did you apply it?
- What is the boldest career move you've ever made?

**Integrity/Honesty:**

- Describe a time when you set your sights too high (or too low).
- Tell us about a time when you chose to stand on principle.

**Leadership:**

- Tell us about a team project when you had to take the lead or take charge. What did you do? How did you do it? What was the result?
- Tell us about how you promoted the development of another person in a work environment.

**Interpersonal Skills:**

- Give an example of when you had to work with someone who was difficult to get along with. How did you handle it? How did the relationship progress?
- Describe a situation where you became an informal leader, even when you didn't have the titular role.

**Planning and Organization/Time Management:**

- Please give us examples of how you prioritize projects and tasks.
- What is your process for managing your calendar?

**Teamwork:**

- Describe a situation where you have had to work as part of a team to achieve a result. What was your role? Is that a common role for you?
- How do you go about getting to know your team and colleagues?

**Section 2 - Basic Interview Questions**

Basic interview questions allow us to expand our knowledge of the candidate's responsibilities, motivation and past experience. The answers to questions 1-4 are the basis for comparing an applicant's current work environment to CSUN's. The answers to questions 5-9 allow a candidate to share their career goals and make a statement about how working at CSUN fits into those goals.

1. Tell us about your current place of work: size, mission, what makes it special.
2. What are your responsibilities in your current position?
3. Who do you report to?
4. How did you get your current position (promotion, transfer, referred, applied)?
5. Why would you consider leaving your current position?
6. What about this position interests you the most?
7. What in your past experience or education prepares you for this position?
8. Tell us about your involvement in professional or trade organizations.
9. What are your professional goals one, five and ten years from now?

**Section 3 - Chart of Unlawful/Lawful Inquiries**

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Unlawful Question</b>	<b>Lawful Question</b>
<b>Absences</b>	Any inquiry as to the number of days missed due to illness.	How would you rate your overall attendance record?
<b>Address</b>	List of previous addresses, how long at each specific address.	How long have you lived in this area?
<b>Age</b>	Any.	Applicants are asked to confirm that they are over the age of 18 on the application.
<b>Citizenship</b>	Any.	Applicants are asked to certify their understanding that if hired, they must provide proof of identity and authorization work in the country to Human Resources.
<b>Close Relatives</b>	What is your marital status? With whom do you reside? Do you live with your parents? Do you have any children, and what are their names and ages?	Applicants are asked to provide information regarding close relatives as part of the application. Human Resources will contact the department if necessary.

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Unlawful Question</b>	<b>Lawful Question</b>
<b>Conviction History</b>	Any.	Applicants are asked to provide information regarding convictions as part of the application. Human Resources will contact the department if necessary.
<b>Disability</b>	Do you have any physical disabilities? What is your handicap? What caused your handicap? Have you had any recent serious illness?	The job interview should focus on the ability of an applicant to perform the job, not on disability. Applicants may be asked to describe how the work would be performed with or without accommodation. Please keep in mind that all applicants should be asked the same questions.
<b>Drug/alcohol use</b>	Any inquiry that is not job-related or necessary for determining an applicant's potential for employment.	None.
<b>Education</b>	Any question asking specifically the nationality, racial or religious affiliation of a school.	Questions related to academic, vocational, or professional education of an applicant, including schools attended, degrees/ diplomas received, and courses of study, as related to job performance.
<b>Military Service</b>	General questions about military service such as dates, discharge or service in a foreign military service.	Questions about relevant knowledge, skills and abilities acquired during applicant's military service.
<b>Family</b>	Number and age of children, child bearing/rearing questions.	None.
<b>Marital or Parental Status</b>	Any inquiry about marital status, children, plans for having children, pregnancy, or child care plans.	Whether applicant can meet work schedule or job requirements. Should be asked of all applicants (both sexes).
<b>Name</b>	If your name has been legally changed, what was your former name?	Have you ever worked under a different name?
<b>National Origin /Ancestry</b>	What is your nationality/lineage/ ancestry/descent/parentage? How did you acquire the ability to speak, read, or write a foreign language? What language is spoken in your home? What is your native language?	What languages do you speak, read, or write fluently? (Lawful only if job-related.)

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Unlawful Question</b>	<b>Lawful Question</b>
<b>Organizations</b>	To what organizations, clubs, and/or societies do you belong?	To what professional organizations do you belong?
<b>Personal Finances</b>	Inquiries regarding credit record, owning a home, or garnishment record.	None.
<b>Political Affiliation</b>	Inquiries about membership in a political party.	None.
<b>Race or Color</b>	Any question that directly or indirectly relates to race or color.	None.
<b>Religion</b>	Do you attend religious services or a house of worship? What is your religious denomination or affiliation, church, parish, or pastor? What religious holidays do you observe?	None.
<b>Sex</b>	Any inquiry as to sex, such as: Do you wish to be addressed as Mr., Mrs., Miss, or Ms.?	None.
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	Any.	None.
<b>Smoker/ Non-smoker</b>	You may not question whether a person smokes.	You may inform the candidate that they will be working in a "smoke free" facility.
<b>Work Schedule</b>	Any question related to child care, ages of children, or other subject that is likely to be perceived as discriminatory by protected group members, especially women.	Describe the work schedule and ask whether the applicant can work that schedule.
<b>Work-Related Injuries</b>	Any inquiry as to the number of workers' compensation injuries.	None.