



**Tips and Tidbits  
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**Question: What purpose does a job interview serve? Is it absolutely necessary to the selection of the “best” candidate? How should an interview be conducted?**

The objective of an interview is to clarify data on the resume; obtain additional information not presented in the resume; determine, to a degree, the candidate’s truthfulness regarding information in the resume; obtain detailed information on the candidate’s experience in order to better evaluate qualifications and suitability for the desired position; and, to obtain information from the candidate which will help appraise character and motivation. As such, it is a valuable tool in the selection process and should be conducted wisely and fairly in order to pick the best person for the job. This means the interview must be tactful, courteous, objective and perceptive.

It is the selecting official’s prerogative to select the person best qualified and most likely to succeed in the job; however, selections must be made in a fair, legal and nondiscriminatory manner. Selecting officials should always adhere to basic rules and use proper procedures in judging the applicant’s qualifications [in terms of job requirements] in order to ensure they are on safe ground. Practices that suggest a person was preselected for a position filled under competitive promotion procedures or that a promotion was based on favoritism should be avoided at all costs as these practices impact organizational morale and could result in formal complaints. Among such practices are misassignments, excessive noncompetitive details, temporary promotions that create the impression of pre selection, changes in qualification requirements, reappraisals of candidates, appraisals or other recommendations which actually show or elude to bias, inordinately long delays in selection, and improperly conducted interviews .

It is not always necessary or practical to interview; however, in the grand scheme of things, it may very well lead to or solidify a selection. Whether one, some, all, or none are interviewed will depend on the type of referral list issued and internal departmental policies. A prepared list of questions and a matrix will help ensure all candidates are judged on the same criteria. Interview questions should be prepared in advance, directly related to the candidates ability to perform the duties of the position, and asked in the same order for each interview whether accomplished by a single interviewer or a panel.

A selecting official’s inherent responsibility to select the best qualified candidate requires that they be educated and knowledgeable of the proper interview techniques to utilize in the selection process. Below are a few tips:

- ❖ If a panel is utilized, it should **only** be comprised of Federal employees whose grade is at least equivalent to the position being filled. An odd number of panelists between 3 and 5 is best.
- ❖ Interviews may be conducted face-to-face or over the phone; however, to the fullest extent possible, consistency, particularly between groups of applicants, should be sought. For instance, if monetary limitations preclude the organization from funding

applicants outside of the immediate area to travel for face-to-face interviews, *all applicants in a similar situation* should not be required to travel for an interview whereas all on-site applicants [or those within a reasonable traveling distance] would be required to interview face to face.

- ❖ All interview proceedings should be well-documented. Selecting officials are not required to provide interview results/documentation to HR professionals as part of the selection package, but this information may be necessary to defend a selection; therefore, it should be maintained as part of the official's personal/selection file.
- ❖ Interview results should not be given undue weight in determining the best qualified candidate(s). Rather, they should be combined with the results of other information, including the resume, previous supervisor's input/assessments, and reference checks to determine a candidate's final position relative to other competitors. The interview should only be one factor in a comprehensive evaluation process.
- ❖ The interview should not be used to determine the candidate's basic qualifications. The Civilian Personnel Advisory Center (CPAC) staff has already done this during the screening process and has referred only those candidates that have met the basic qualifications and have been determined to be best qualified. Instead, the interview should be utilized to [further] differentiate the candidate's qualities, to distinguish the "best" of the best" of those referred.
- ❖ Based on the number of candidates referred, sequential "rounds" of interviews could be employed. If so, a second set of interview questions should be developed. For example, if 30 applicants were initially interviewed and 12 were determined to be the "best" candidates, a second round of interviews could be utilized to further cull these candidates. If management opted to do this, a different set of interview questions, developed in advance of the second round of interviews, would be necessary.

For additional information please contact your servicing HR Specialist. Also, coming soon, is our Supervisors' Guide to Effective Interviewing, which once published, will be posted to our website.

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