

6. How to Conduct a Telephone Interview

1 WHY CONDUCT A TELEPHONE INTERVIEW?

Once you have received and reviewed applications for your vacancy, a telephone interview can be a great first stage of the interview process.

There are several reasons why companies may choose to conduct a telephone interview. These include:

- It is convenient for the busy employer. Conducting a face to face interview is time-consuming, so a telephone interview is an effective way of covering some of the basic but essential questions. You can then decide whether you should invest more time and invite the candidate to attend to a face to face interview.
- The telephone interview is usually fairly short in duration (20 - 30 minutes). Given the short duration, a telephone interview is convenient for the candidate and the employer and reduces travel costs.
- Using available alternative technology can be convenient when the candidate is not local. If you receive applications from overseas candidates, you can hold interviews over Skype or video.
- It gives you an opportunity to clarify any immediate queries arising from the application.

2 WHAT TO COVER DURING A TELEPHONE INTERVIEW

This is a good time to check that the candidate has some of the basic but essential requirements that will help you decide whether you'd like to progress them to the next interview stage.

Firstly, check that this is still a good time for the candidate to have a conversation. You want them to be comfortable and able to have an open and honest conversation with you.

Ensure that you use a friendly yet professional tone of voice. You want the candidate to feel comfortable and able to give a good impression.

Here are some examples of questions you could ask during the telephone interview:

- *What are your salary expectations?*
Check that the salary expectations are aligned with what you are offering.
- *Have you considered how you would get to work if you are offered the job?*
Check that the location and commute are realistic.
- *The working hours of this role are full time. Is this what you are looking for?*
Check that the candidate is able to work the hours required of the role
- *Are you eligible to work in this country?*
Check that they are eligible to work in the country and whether they would be able to provide documentation (e.g. passport) to demonstrate this. You will need to see this documentation if you decide to employ them.
- *What is your understanding of this role?* Check on the candidate's understanding of the role and why they are interested in your vacancy. Describe the role and responsibilities a little and ensure that they are still interested in the position.
- *What is the notice period you are required to give should you be offered the position?* This will help you to plan and prepare for your new employee to start if they are progressed within the process.
- Allow the candidate to ask questions.

3 RELEVANT LEGISLATION

The Equality Act 2010 makes it unlawful to discriminate against someone because of one or more protected characteristics, and job seekers are covered by this.

The protected characteristics are;

- Age
- Race
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation.

To minimise the risk of a claim for unfairness or discrimination, only ask questions that are relevant because they relate to requirements of the job.

For example, do **not** ask,

‘Are you married? Do you have children? How do you manage your childcare?’

Instead you could ask,

‘This role is full time. Is this what you are looking for?’

It is good practice to use the same set of questions for all of the telephone interviews and keep the notes you have made during each call. If you receive a claim of unfairness or discrimination, this will help you to demonstrate that you have made a decision based on a fair and objective process and not due to one of the protected characteristics.

4 KEY POINTS

Make sure you are ready for the telephone interview. Have the CV in front of you and a pen and paper ready so that you can take notes.

Inform your candidates of the specific day and time that the telephone interview will take place. Set up some template communications (emails or letters) to invite the candidate to have a telephone interview or interview, that are ready to use whenever you have suitable candidates.

Let them know how long the phone call might take and the name of the person they will be speaking to. Let them know if you will be calling them or whether they should call you. Confirm the details in writing and ask the candidate to confirm their availability to you.

5 NEXT STEPS

- Create a template form with questions you will ask during telephone interviews to help ensure consistency and fairness in your process.
- Be prepared to answer questions about your business or industry. Talk about upcoming plans and where the candidate fits in to your overall objectives for the company. It’s a great opportunity to make the candidate feel engaged with the company and excited about the prospect of coming to work for you.

- After you have conducted the telephone interviews ensure that you respond to all the candidates, regardless of the outcome. You should aim to leave all candidates with a great impression of your business as they may apply for another position in the future.

6 FACTSHEETS & TEMPLATES TO HELP

- How to Create a Job Description and Person Specification
- Promoting an Equal Opportunities Workplace and Avoiding Discrimination
- Ho to Invite Candidates to an Interview
- How to Conduct a Face to Face Interview
- How to Review Candidates and Make a Hiring Decision
- Data Protection
- Interview Assessment Form

7 FOR MORE ADVICE AND INFORMATION

ACAS - (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service) free and impartial information and advice to employers and employees on all aspects of workplace relations and employment law. www.acas.org.uk

Achieve in Bath & North East Somerset - free recruitment support, advice and help. Matching job seekers, employers and course providers to help employers recruit, train and retain employees. www.achieveinbathnes.co.uk

Future Bright - free help & support for businesses and employees to realise their full potential. Provide access to training and development, workshops and networking. HR support to promote career progression and best practice to attract and retain staff. www.futurebright.org.uk

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