Create It! Coaching

...Creating the Life you Desire Today!

Seven Items To Consider When Interviewing Potential Staff Members

I have interviewed potential applicants for a variety of staff positions over the past 20 years. In the nonprofit field, I have found there are certain steps supervisors should take when interviewing potential candidates. My top seven items to consider during the interview process, to ensure you identify the most interested and qualified applicants, are as follows:

1. Once the closing date for accepting applications and/or cover letters and resumes has passed, decide who will review all application related materials. If you have a Human Resource (HR) department, they should review all submitted items first. Their screening will ensure that supervisors only get applications from those candidates who meet the minimum requirements. If you don't have a HR department, decide who will review the batch of applications. Usually, this individual will be the immediate supervisor.

2. Once the supervisor reviews and sorts through the applications, s/he will need to decide how many applicants to interview, establish an interview schedule, and determine if there should be a second staff person included in the interviews. As a rule of thumb, the higher level the position, the higher the number of staff members involved in the interview. It is always a good idea to solicit a second or third opinion regarding a candidate's actual credentials and response to interview questions.

3. Contact the individuals you want to interview, by phone and email to ensure they receive your message. Be clear about the date and location of the interview, who the interviewer(s) will be, and if the applicant needs to bring any documents or additional information (e.g., references) with them.

4. Decide on the type of interview to be conducted. Do you want the interview to a) be a question and answer session, b) engage the applicant in a role playing session and/or 3) have the applicant demonstrate his/her writing style?

5. During the initial interview:

a. Reiterate the position's qualifications, job duties, and expectations. You want to ensure that the applicant clearly understands what is required and expected of him/her, and that s/he will be able to perform all of the position's essential functions.

b. You should also develop a list of pre-determined, job-related questions to ask all candidates. Your questions should enable you to solicit sufficient information to determine who is best qualified for the position. If there is more than one staff person involved in the interview, decide ahead of time who asks which questions.

c. Discuss all employee benefits, including, but not limited to, health, dental, and vision insurance; vacation, sick, and flex time; short-term and long-term disability insurance; life insurance; and the agency's retirement plan, if applicable. If the position's salary is low and you have had a difficult time recruiting people, consider providing some additional benefit to offset the salary, such as additional vacation time or the opportunity to work at home.

d. Request at least three professional references. Although employers may only provide the dates an applicant was employed with them, you should always check references. In addition, conduct driving record and/or background checks, if required by your organization.

e. Carefully observe the applicant in the interview, both verbally and nonverbally. How is s/he dressed? How quick is s/he in responding to questions? Does s/he appear to have the knowledge, experience, and skills you're looking for? Does the applicant ask questions? Is it apparent the applicant has researched your organization and the specific position for which s/he is interviewing? Does the applicant appear to be interested in the organization's mission and the available position? How does the applicant respond to information regarding the position's salary and special requirements (e.g., travel, night and weekend hours), if applicable? Does the applicant maintain eye contact?

6. If you have a lot of seemingly qualified applicants or the position is for a higher level employee, you may want to consider scheduling a second round of interviews. A second interview provides the opportunity for you, other designated staff members, and the applicant to get to know each other better, and to determine if the applicant is, in comparison to the other applicants, the best candidate for the position.

7. During the interview(s), be sure to inform all candidates when you will make a final decision, whether that relates to a second interview or a hiring decision. Inform them if they will be contacted by phone or email, or both.

Although your time to interview candidates may be limited, take caution not to rush through the interviewing process. Applications and/or cover letters and resumes can provide some information about applicants, but the interview is your opportunity to observe and get to know the applicant, and to assess whether or not s/he would be a good fit for your team and organization. A well-structured interviewing process will also help you find the best candidate possible.

If you want to make positive changes in your professional life, and create the job or career you desire and deserve, then working with Executive & Life Coach, Sharon L. Mikrut, is the solution. Although her specialty is in partnering with nonprofit executive directors and managers to maximize their resources in a competitive environment, she is passionate about working with all individuals committed to personal and/or professional growth. Visit her website at http://www.createitcoaching.org or Nonprofit Professionals blog at http://www.createitcoaching.com, and sign up for her free monthly newsletter that provides information and resources designed to help you manage your nonprofit organization in a more effective and efficient manner. You can also visit her Empowerment blog at http://www.createitcoaching.net, and sign up for her free monthly life coaching newsletter.