



THE ART OF INTERVIEWING

HR's Guide to Hosting the
Perfect Interview

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Recruiting talent and successfully staffing an organization can be a challenge. You want to make sure you hire the right person, at the right time, and for the right role, all the while staying time and cost efficient.

You've got a lot on your plate. Don't lose your candidate to the competition due to a shaky interview. Check out these interview tips to help you secure top candidates before they're off the market.

Pro tip: Make sure you have an Applicant Tracking System to manage your candidate pool and recruitment process every step of the way. Learn more [here](#).

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TOP 5 INTERVIEW TIPS

The Skills and Techniques You Need to Secure Top Talent

Bernie Tip #1: Prepare Ahead of Time

Make sure you are crystal clear on the job expectations, responsibilities, and goals of the role before walking into the interview. This will help you create effective and standardized interview questions. Additionally, make sure to review the candidate's resume to see if you have any candidate-specific queries.

By planning ahead and creating a concise and clear structure to the interview, you can focus less on refreshing your memory or thinking of new questions and more on what the candidate is actually saying during the interview.

Did you know? Candidates who drop out of the recruitment process are most likely to do so after an in-person interview.

Source: Job Seeker Nation Survey - Jobvite

Bernie Tip #2: Encourage Small Talk

An interview can be an anxiety-provoking and uncomfortable experience for many applicants. But you can help reduce some of this stress with the simple art of small talk. (Keep reading; there's more to come on small talk later in this e-book)! By starting the interview with just a few minutes of small talk, you'll not only make the interview environment more comfortable, but you'll also build rapport with the candidate.

The benefit is two-fold. First, when relaxed, the candidate is more likely to have an open and honest dialogue. And second, they'll feel more comfortable with you, in turn helping them think more positively about your organization and the interview process as a whole—which can affect their final decision.

Did you know? 67% of employed American adults agree that the application, interview, or offer process would make or break their decision on whether to take a job.

Source: iCIMS, Candidate Experience Report



TOP 5 INTERVIEW TIPS

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Bernie Tip #3: Take Notes

Taking notes shows the candidate that you are interested and engaged with what they are saying. It will also help you remember specific details that might help separate candidates from one another—and that you'd have likely forgotten otherwise. It can also help you tailor candidate-specific follow-up questions to guide the interview, make it more conversational, and really get to the heart of the candidate.

And as an added bonus, if you take notes during the interview, it will be much easier to relay your takeaways to the hiring manager, or other decision-makers, days (and possibly weeks) later.

Did you know? A recruiter's conversation skills have a 40% impact on an employee's image of the company during an interview.

Source: Job Seeker Nation Survey - Jobvite

Bernie Tip #4: Watch Your Nonverbal Communication

Your gestures, expressions, body language, eye contact (or lack thereof), and other behaviors can affect how the candidate perceives you and, by extension, your organization. On the flip side, their nonverbal behaviors may affect your opinion of them as well. These cues can actually be quite helpful. For example, if the candidate appears uncomfortable making eye contact or having a direct conversation, they might not be the best fit for an in-person sales role.

That said, always remember that your past experiences and background can influence your perception of these cues. So try to remain objective even when making note of nonverbal behaviors.

Did you know? A recruiter's appearance or personal style has a 37% impact on company image during onsite interviews.

Source: Job Seeker Nation Survey - Jobvite



TOP 5 INTERVIEW TIPS

The Skills and Techniques You Need to Secure Top Talent

Bernie Tip #5: Stay Compliant With Federal Regulations

There are lots of EEOC regulations to ensure equal employment opportunities and to protect job applicants from discrimination based on race, ethnicity, sex (including pregnancy, gender identity, and sexual orientation), national origin, age, or disability.

This means that there are a number of questions that are illegal to ask during an interview.

Here are five types of interview questions to avoid for EEOC compliance:

- ✗ Avoid asking a lot of age-related questions, such as when the candidate graduated from high school.
- ✗ Avoid asking about gender, religion, national origin, ethnicity, or race.
- ✗ Avoid asking whether or not a candidate plans to have children.
- ✗ Avoid asking about physical or mental disabilities, medications, or workers' comp history.
- ✗ Avoid asking a candidate to take a medical exam before an offer is presented.

Want to learn more? [Click here](#) for more about EEOC regulations.

SAMPLE INTERVIEW TEMPLATE

Use this guide to structure your interview and ask the questions that get to the heart of the candidate. Build the most effective interview—one question at a time.

1. Break the Ice

Start with small talk to help the candidate feel comfortable in the interview environment.

Sample Questions:

- Where are you from originally?
- What prompted your move to X city?
- What do you like to do for fun?

2. The First Question

Once they feel a bit more comfortable, move on to the first real interview question.

Sample Question:

- To get started, why don't you tell me what your understanding of the job is?

3. The Resume Review

Next, move on to their resume. This will likely be the bulk of the interview, as you are trying to gain insight into the candidate's decision-making process, their effectiveness, and their passion for the role.

Sample Questions:

- Can you briefly walk me through your resume, starting with college and including a synopsis of each job you've held thereafter?
- How did you make your major life decisions?
 - Why did you pick that school?
 - How did you decide on that major?
 - How did you decide to take/leave that job?
- What were some achievements at each job?
- Can you provide a few examples of mistakes you made and how you would do things differently now?
- What were some of your favorite parts of each position? What were some of the most challenging parts of each job?
- If I were to ask your boss about you, what would they say? How would your coworkers describe you?

SAMPLE INTERVIEW TEMPLATE

4. Address Assessments

If you asked the candidate to take a personality assessment, use this next time to have them walk you through their takeaways on their own assessment. Afterward, move on to your assessment.

Sample Questions:

- Do you see anything that might indicate challenges for us to work together? Or any characteristics that would help our working relationship?
- Does anything from your assessment immediately stand out to you as spot on, surprising, or incorrect?

If you asked the candidate to take a role-specific skills test, take some time here to discuss their answers.

Sample Questions:

- What were your initial thoughts when receiving the details of the skills test?
- What do you think you did well? Do you see any areas you could have answered or handled differently?
- How did you decide on this course of action?

5. Q&A and Next Steps

Finally, wrap up the interview with Q&A. Give the candidate some time to process the information they've just received, and allow them to gain more insight into you and the role.

If at this point in time you haven't decided against the candidate, below are the next steps you'll want to address as you conclude your time with the applicant.

- Ask for permission to continue on with reference checks.
- Explain your next steps in reaching out to their provided references.
- Make sure the candidate has your direct phone line if they need to ask any additional questions about the role.

BUILDING YOUR OWN INTERVIEW

A successful interview will give you a good idea of both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the candidate to help you determine if they are a good potential match. As we've explored throughout this e-book, the structure of the interview and the questions themselves can have a large impact on this success.

There are many types of interview techniques, but one of the most popular is **behavioral interviewing**.

Behavioral interviews are quick and reliable ways to assess a candidate's qualities. Many HR pros consider them to be the most effective type of interviewing technique.

***Did you know?** A common maxim in psychology is that past behavior is the best predictor of future behavior.*

Behavioral Questions

- ✓ Focus on candidate's past experiences
- ✓ Are pointed, are specific, and require real-life examples
- ✓ Are given to every candidate in the same order
- ✓ Can help the interviewer score and compare candidates
- ✓ Reveal the candidate's actual level of experience

The STAR Method

Ready to start crafting your own interview questions? Try the STAR method, a targeted approach to developing behavioral interview questions. STAR method interview questions ask candidates to share a past experience, including the following:

Situation: What was the situation or problem that needed to be solved?

Task: What did the candidate need to accomplish?

Action: What did the candidate do to address the problem?

Results: What happened as a result of the candidate's action? What was the status of the situation moving forward?

BUILDING YOUR OWN INTERVIEW

See it in action:

- ✗ “Tell me about your conflict management process.”
- ✓ “Tell me about a time you experienced conflict in the workplace. What steps did you take to mitigate the situation, and what was the outcome?”

- ✗ “How do you handle pressure at work?”
- ✓ “Describe a time when you were under a lot of pressure at work. How did you react, and how did it turn out?”

- ✗ “Walk me through how you manage your time efficiently.”
- ✓ “Tell me about a time where you were faced with multiple competing deadlines and had to manage your time wisely. What did you do, and what was the result?”

Conclusion

According to BerniePortal's [State of HR 2023 Report](#), 85% of employers marked hiring, retention, or both as a primary HR goal at their organization. But with unemployment rates still low and the labor market still driven by candidates, it is especially difficult for small and midsize businesses to compete and hire quality candidates.

In such a difficult recruiting environment, the thought of attracting a strong candidate but losing them during the interview process is even more daunting. Standardize your interview process, and make sure you're asking the right questions to lock in the dream candidate.

Additional Recruitment Resources to Help Along the Way:



See how BerniePortal can speed up the time to hire and improve retention rates.

[Learn More](#)