

A CWW Toolkit To

Interview Preparation Guide



Conversations
with **Wandy**

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The Opportunities an interview provides

A well-planned and executed interview provides a very unique opportunity for an employer to not only gauge the skills, experience, and ability of a potential employee against a job opening, but it also provides an opportunity for an employer to gauge how well a potential employee fits with the corporate culture.

There are many other opportunities that a well-planned and executed interview provides both an employer and employee. The opportunities listed below are pivotal to an organization's success:

- Interviews are an opportunity for an employer to give applicants an insight into their employer brand. When done correctly, brand ambassadors can be created irrespective of whether or not an applicant was hired.
- Hiring a candidate that is fit for an organization saves costs related to having to repeat the process when replacing a bad hire. These costs are not only monetary but also include other non-tangible items like culture erosion among others.

It, therefore, is imperative that an organization utilizes the opportunities presented by an interview process to its full advantage by having well-planned and executed interviews.

Approaches to interviewing

The approach to interviewing can either be structured or unstructured.

A structured approach to an interview is more formal and has a structure around it. Such interviews commonly begin with introductions, and a few ice breakers lead to a formal conversation. The conversation, in this case, involves an interviewer asking questions to an interviewee in a standardized order. The responses a candidate gives are scored against a set scoring system.

A structured interview has its advantages. They include but are not limited to:

- The consistency in approach makes the results less prone to error.
- Prior preparation of questions and scoring system makes the experience more effective.
- Comparison of candidate performance is made easier.
- The availability of a set scoring system helps to reduce interviewer bias.

An unstructured approach to interviewing is more spontaneous as the interviewer has no prepared set of questions. The questions in such interviews are influenced by the direction of the conversation. In this approach, different candidates are asked different questions.

An unstructured interview has its advantages. They include but are not limited to:

- They are more personalized in nature.
- The free-flowing nature of these interviews allows candidates to be at ease hence more natural and honest responses can be achieved.

An organization should consider the job requirements, information needed from candidates, and corporate culture to help them decide which approach works best for the

Types of interviews

Several types of interviews are used. Depending on the need of an organization, any of the listed types below can be used. This list focuses on the most commonly used interview types.

a) Prescreening interviews – These are used to filter out applicants who do not meet the minimum selection criteria for more elaborate interviews. Prescreening interviews can be done through telephone, completing of forms online or in person.

b) One-on-one interviews – These are the traditional face-to-face interviews with candidates. The interviews can be conducted by an individual interviewer or a panel of several interviewers.

They can be structured or unstructured and can be approached in several ways depending on the type of information required from the candidate. The most common approaches are:

- **Behavioral** – Here, emphasis is made on past behavior as a predictor of future behavior. A candidate's experience, personal attributes, and job-related skills form the focus of the interview questions.
- **Competency-based** - This approach focuses on certain skills that are needed for the job. Interview questions focus on the set skill criteria identified for a job.
- **Situational** – This approach focuses on how a candidate thinks and responds to different situations. Interview questions are formed mainly from hypothetical situations that require a candidate to respond with how they have previously or hypothetically reacted to and manage similar situations.

Preparing for and conducting an interview

Once an approach and an interview type have been determined, the following steps become very useful when preparing for an interview.

- a) Have your pre-interview checklist** – This checklist should be able to cover the following areas:
- ❑ Understand the job requirements while singling out the factors critical to the success of the role.
 - ❑ Select the candidates for the interview. Ensure that checks like verification of certificates, understanding of candidate pay requirements are understood at this point.
 - ❑ Decide who will interview the candidate.
 - ❑ Have a planning meeting with the interview team to prepare them for the interview.
 - ❑ Ensure that all interviewers are well appraised on all candidate information e.g. they have read the CVs, job description, and other prescreening materials for all candidates.
 - ❑ Select and frame, with the interviewers, questions that will assess the suitability of the candidate for the role. (This step can be skipped in the event an unstructured interview approach has been selected).
 - ❑ Select an assessment criterion for the interview questions.
 - ❑ Create a scoring sheet. Ensure that the sheet is standardized for all the candidates interviewing for a similar role.
 - ❑ Decide on who will interview the candidate. In situations where a panel interview is preferred, select who will lead the panel interview.
 - ❑ Agree on which interviewer will ask which questions (for panel interviews).

- Agree on a time, date, and venue for the interview.
 - Plan a post-interview follow-up process.
 - Invite the candidates for the interview.
- b) During the interviews; this guide focuses on a structured panel interview, it is critical to ensure the following:
- The interviewers remain in control of the interview.
 - Create an environment during the interview that will foster effective communication.
 - Ask follow-up questions in situations where the criteria under review have not been met.
 - Take notes.
 - Allow the candidate time to ask questions.
 - Be prepared to answer questions.
 - Close the interview once the conversation is concluded properly.
- c) Immediately after the interview, the interview panel are advised to ensure that:
- Individually assess the presentation of each candidate.
 - A post-interview meeting is held for the panel to align on candidate ratings and or performance.
 - A candidate is selected; if one of the candidates meets the riteria, in full agreement with the choice by the interview panel.
- d) Once the panel assessment has settled on a candidate that has met the requirements for the job, the hiring manager or the Human Resource Office should reach out to the candidate and inform them that they have been successful in the interview.
- e) The selected candidate should be well informed of the next process after being successful in the interview. These processes include verification of previous experience, reference checks, statutory and legal compliance checks

among others.

- f) Once the checks are concluded, invite the successful candidate for a meeting to discuss an offer of employment.
- g) Employment offers should be made in writing after its discussion. Ensure that a candidate signs the offer letter to signify their acceptance.
- h) Reach out to the unsuccessful candidates to communicate the end of the process.

Common pitfalls during this process

- a) Being too quick to judge a candidate's ability.
- b) Trying to recruit a person that is exactly similar to yourself.
- c) Stereotyping candidates.
- d) Asking closed questions that do not allow for better insight into a candidate,
- e) Asking questions that are either illegal or those that do not foster principles of equal employment opportunities.



A close-up photograph of a person's hands turning a modern, curved faucet handle. Water is flowing from the spout into a dark-colored cup. The person is wearing a light blue button-down shirt and a black wristwatch. The background is softly blurred, showing what appears to be a kitchen setting. A semi-transparent white rectangular box is overlaid on the lower portion of the image, containing the publication information. To the right of the image, there is a vertical bar with three colored segments: blue, dark blue, and orange.

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