

Avoiding Critical Mistakes in the Selection Process

Last month's article discussed how the interviewing phase of the selection process of hiring a new associate is a major investment for your firm. Not only does it involve the tangible costs of selecting an associate but it also involves that precious commodity that lawyers never seem to have enough of. TIME. This month I'd like to take the eight critical mistakes made in the selection process, which were discussed in last month's article and offer some practical suggestions on how to avoid them.

1. Interviewers miss critical information: By looking at the highlights of the candidate's job history many interviewers become awed by the accomplishments presented. It is important to carefully review the candidate's resume and application BEFORE the interview. Use a highlighter to reference points on the resume you want clarified. Leave no stone unturned and take nothing for granted.
2. Interviewers fail to determine job fit: Sometimes we look so closely at the qualifications we fail as interviewers to look at a candidate's motivation. The why's or reason they want to work for your firm. You may call this chemistry or fit. Whatever the term is it is important to know why someone wants to work for you and what needs are they looking to have met. Without that there may be a mis-match and eventually the newly hired employee will leave or be terminated.
3. Interviewers are not organized: Many times interviewers will come into an interview without having taken the time to review the candidate's resume and highlight items for discussion. The interviewer will assume by asking the candidate some general questions that they will be able to buy some time, review the resume and get up to speed, while the candidate is giving their answer. This rarely works and the candidate sees right through it.
4. Interviewers bring biases and stereotypes into the interview: Because most interviewers do not take the time to prepare or even look at the resume and develop critical questions they will at times bring in biases about the candidate's education, background or career path. By preparing for the interview in advance the interviewer can deal with those matters in advance and look critically at the candidate to see if their background and experience will fit the needs and chemistry of the firm.
5. Multi-Interviewers repeat questions: This goes back to preparation for the interview prior to the interview. When there is more than one person taking part in the interview process someone from the firm should take the lead and assign parts of the interview questioning to each interviewer. The lead person should also know the types of questions each interviewer will be asking.
6. Interviewers misinterpret the candidate's answers: It is very important that interviewers ask questions and listen to the answers. It is also very important that interviewers ask follow up questions to the answers given by the candidate. By asking follow up questions

it shows that not only is the interviewer listening, it gives clarification to items listed on the resume and information received during the interview.

7. Interviewers make snap decisions: The best advice is don't. If you, as an interviewer, have taken detailed notes you will need time to review those notes and come to a logical decision regarding the interview. Waiting 24 hours will allow you the opportunity to make a sound rational decision.

8. Interviewers fail to take notes: If I were asked which is the biggest critical mistake an interviewer makes during an interview it would be this, not taking detailed notes. Without notes an interviewer can only rely on their memory and if more than one candidate is being interviewed that day how is the interviewer to make a proper rational decision? Not taking notes is probably the most frequent and most costly mistake an interviewer can make. When an interviewer comes into the interview they should take detailed notes and when the interview is complete those notes should be stapled to the resume and placed in a folder for later review.

By taking time to prepare and plan for a candidate interview you not only show the candidate how professional you are but you show the candidate that their time is valuable and even if they do not receive a job offer you have left them with a good feeling about themselves, your firm and your selection process.