How to Review and Screen Applicants

Review applicant resumes

Your goal for the resume review is to eliminate resumes that do not meet your minimum requirements. Some quick tips for planning and conducting an effective review:

- Using the job description or job ad as your guide, determine the criteria for your review. Examples: Minimum experience and education requirements.
- As you review, keep your focus on the criteria you have identified. For now, ignore information that is unrelated to job requirements, like the applicant’s name.
- To help you focus on only relevant information, block out personal information like name and address. Then use a highlighter or other method to flag your key criteria.
- Sort resumes into three groups: those you definitely want to interview; those that are possibilities; and those that do not meet the minimum requirements.
- Make another pass through the resumes in the “maybe” group to ensure you did not overlook something that might be important for your needs.
- With your final resume choices in hand, note any quick questions you may want to ask applicants in the phone interview.

Conduct telephone interviews

Phone interviews help you learn what you cannot from resumes alone—like how well candidates communicate. Plan the questions you want to ask ahead of time (see below for examples). Focus on determining the suitability and availability of the candidate.

Tips for effective phone interviews:

- Start with a friendly introduction and confirm the candidate’s continued interest. Provide a quick summary of the job and its responsibilities.
- Determine whether candidates have the basic qualifications and might be a good fit:
  - What made you apply for this position?
  - What experience do you have that could help you do this job?
  - What skills do you have that would make you a great fit for this position?
- Determine whether candidates' earning expectations are consistent with what you are offering. Although job seekers are often advised not to talk about salary until they are offered the job, you need this information to determine whether it is feasible to move to the next stage.
  - What kind of salary range are you looking at?
  - What are you earning in your current position?
- Follow up on any questions from your initial review of the candidate's resume, such as clarifying gaps in work experience and getting more details on skills.
- Ask when the candidate would be available to start if offered the position, and how much notice they would need to give before leaving their current position.
- Let candidates know about any inquiries (reference checks, education checks, etc.) that may be necessary if they move on to the next phase of interviewing.
- Thank candidates for their time. Unless you are certain during the call that you want to invite the candidate back for an interview, do not commit to this until you are ready.