

# HIRING: INTERVIEW DOS & DON'TS

## Before the Interview

Before you call someone in for an interview, review their application to ensure the candidate fits your needs. Your preparation for every interview should be unique to each candidate's experience and expertise.

Here are key points to evaluate while you formulate questions prior to the interview:

- **Past Job Experience.** What is the candidate's relevant experience? Relevant experience may not always be direct experience (i.e. in comics)--for example, a person who has worked in a restaurant may not have experience with retail sales, but will likely have lots of customer service experience that will translate well to your shop.
- **Time Spans.** Don't overlook the dates of previous employment. Does your candidate have a long list of experience, but did so by working many jobs for short periods of time? Are there any long gaps in their resume? Will this be their first job?
- **Availability.** Before you interview a candidate, you should verify whether they will be able to cover shifts that you need. based on the hours they are interested in working that they can cover the shifts you need them to.
- **Your Red Flags.** Every store has a unique culture and way of doing things. Keep an eye out for things that might be red flags for your store, or the specific position you are hiring for. You will want to follow up on any concerns you have.

## Creating Questions for the Interview

Even if you work well "on the fly," take a few minutes to create interview questions after you review a candidate's application. You may forget something important during the interview! As a rule of thumb, create 15 questions you can use to get all the information you need. You may not use all 15 in the interview, but having them ready will make the interview run smoothly. Aim for:

- Five questions that help determine if the candidate will fit in with your team's culture
- Five questions that determine whether the candidate has the specific to skills needed to complete the job
- Five questions that address the unique strengths and weakness you noticed in the candidate's application

This variety will give you a wide enough window into who they are, what their experience is, how relevant it is, and how they will fit into the existing team structure. When you are creating interview questions, keep the following notes in mind:



**DO ask open-ended questions.**

Yes-or-no questions lead to yes-or-no answers, so try to ask questions that give your candidate the chance to expand. Instead of asking “Have you ever done this task?” ask something like, “Tell me about a time where you had to do this task.”

**DON'T lead the candidate to the “right” answer.**

We can subconsciously lead a candidate to the answers we want to hear. Be mindful of how you word a question to ensure you are getting the candidate’s genuine response. Instead of asking, “Tell me about a time where you did the right thing to fix a difficult situation with a customer,” ask something like, “If you encountered a customer acting like XYZ, how would you respond?”

**DO create moments for them to tell you about their experiences**

When you ask a question, give the the candidate’s answer room to breathe. Let them tell you details about the information on their application in their words. Your questions are important, but so is they way they respond to your questions.

**DO make your expectations clear in conversation**

When you sit down for your interview, you want to give the candidate a clear view of what the position is and what expectations will be. Use this as a guide for the questions you ask and to help interpret the answers they give.

## Legal Protections

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission has strict protections in place for all interview candidates and incoming associates. It’s important that you, or your hiring manager, comply with these statutes to protect yourself and your candidate at all times. Here are a several things that you should avoid entirely in any interview situation:

- **Race, Religion, Age, or Ethnicity.** Certain personal characteristics that are protected by law, such as race, color, religion, sex, national origin or age should not be brought up directly or indirectly in an interview setting. This includes things like: genealogy, languages spoken at home, churches attended, specifics about professional organizations (sororities, fraternities), etc.
- **Family Planning.** It is unlawful to ask a candidate whether they are pregnant or intend to start a family in the next few years.
- **Medical Issues.** You cannot ask an interview candidate to provide information regarding a disability, even if that disability is seemingly obvious. This extends to family medical history, ongoing treatments and medications, past workers’ compensation claims, etc.
  - You *are* allowed to ask an applicant if they would like to voluntarily report a disability for affirmative action purposes.
  - You *are* allowed to ask an applicant if they will need reasonable accommodation during the application process or on the job in certain circumstances, if the candidate has



disclosed they have a disability. This includes offering to assist or change the application process or work environment/process to allow them reasonable accommodation to perform the job.

## Following Up

As your interview continues, pay close attention to a candidate's answers. Take notes while they speak. Once a candidate has answered a question, you don't have to move on to the next question. It may be just as valuable to follow up on their answer. Remember, you want to avoid leading questions, so if something stands out to you that your candidate mentions, your best bet is to ask them to explain their answer in more detail, or to expand on their actions or the outcome of a certain situation.



# Sample Question List for Associate-Level Interview

1. Tell me about a time when you were given a goal at work. and how you handled it.
2. How do you handle customer objections or rejections when you are suggesting titles?
3. Describe a time when you had to work with a difficult team member. How did you handle it?
4. How do you stay motivated during slow periods? On the flip side, how do you handle fast-moving situations?
5. What strategies do you use to build rapport with your customers?
6. Tell me about a time when you had to handle a high-pressure situation in a customer service setting.
7. What unique characteristics make you well suited to this position?
8. Describe how you would sell the same product to two different customers.
9. What do you think would your current supervisor tell me about you?
10. Describe a situation where you had to handle multiple projects at once. What was the outcome?
11. Tell me about a time when you had to work as part of a team. What were your biggest takeaways from that experience?
12. Tell me about a time when you experienced excellent customer service? What makes that interaction stand out to you?
13. Tell me about a time when you were unable to answer a customer's question. How did you handle the situation?
14. What is one thing you try to accomplish in every customer interaction?
15. Tell me about a time when you had to learn about a product or service quickly in order to talk to customers about it.
16. What can you tell me about our brand and the products we offer?
17. What about our company culture interests you?
18. Tell me about your experience with POS machines and cash-handling.
19. Which of your past experiences do you feel most qualifies you for working in this type of environment? Why?
20. If you had your own comic store and you could only carry seven titles in it, what seven titles would you put on the shelf?

