Prescreening Candidates by Phone

Prescreening candidates by phone provides a way to assess those who appear, from their resumés, to have relevant skills and experience. Use the template below as a guide for specific prescreening questions.

What is a Phone Screening Interview?

The phone screening interview should help determine which candidates you want to advance for in-depth interviews by establishing those who meet the minimum requirements of the job. This saves you and the candidate valuable time because you are only having in-depth interviews with the strongest candidates.

Phone screening interviews can be scheduled throughout the search process. However, the longer the length of time between the phone interview and the next round of more in-depth interviews, the less likely the candidate will sustain interest in the position.

Also, be prepared for follow up questions from candidates with whom you have spoken. If you know, and if it is appropriate, let the candidate know where they stand in the process. Let the candidate know when the next round of interviews is likely to take place.

Scheduling a Phone Screening Interview

To facilitate scheduling, it is often more efficient to send an email to the candidate rather than to call. Respect their need for workplace confidentiality and try to be flexible in scheduling the phone interview. Use the sample email message below as a guide:

> *Thank you for your interest in the _____ position. I would like to invite you to a phone conversation about it.*
>
> *The purpose of the call is to explore your background and interests a little further and to answer any questions you may have at this time. It should take about 25-30 minutes. Are you available to do this in either of the following time frames?*
>
> *Day of week, Date Time Range (AM/PM)*
> *Day of week, Date Time Range (AM/PM)*
>
> *I look forward to hearing from you.*
>
> *Sincerely,*

Phone Screening Interview Guide

Candidate Name: _____ Date: _____

Position Title:_____ Hiring Salary or Hourly Pay Rate Range: _____

Interviewer Name: _____

Identify the job and make the candidate aware that this is one of the first steps in the selection process. At this point, it is important to clarify the candidate's pay expectations for the position, and if appropriate, let them know the hiring pay range. ***Do not ask the candidate to provide current pay or pay history. This is not permitted under the Massachusetts Equal Pay Act.***

Provide the candidate with a high-level overview of the position and the department.

Questions and Comments	Candidate's Answers	Answer Rating*
The hiring pay range for this position is _____. OR What are your ***pay expectations*** for this position? (If the candidate shares current pay, make a note indicating that this information was volunteered.)		
Please tell me why you're interested in leaving your present job?		
What does your current position entail?		
What do you like most about your current role?		

Questions and Comments	Candidate's Answers	Answer Rating*
What do you find most challenging about your current role?		
What interests you most about this position?		
What is your ideal work environment?		
Give me an example of how you have fostered a positive environment with teammates.		
What is your approach to understanding the perspectives of colleagues from different backgrounds?		
Review key job requirements and list questions to ask the candidate to help you understand their related skills and abilities. Q1. Q2. Q3. Q4.		
If you have questions about the candidate's resume (gaps in employment, for example) ask them to explain.		

***Answer Ratings:** **0**: Refused to answer the question; **1**: Failed to understand the question/answer not relevant to the question; **2**: Partially answered the question, omitted vital details or unclear; **3**: Generic/complete answer or partially explained scenario; **4**: Thoughtful, logical, complete answer - did not offer a unique/insightful perspective; **5**: Thoughtful, logical, articulate response - offered a unique/insightful perspective