

The Best Interview Questions to Ask

Find a person whose mission matches yours.

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When you think about hiring a new employee, do you groan and consider it a dreaded task? After all, it's hard to find the right person for the position you need and to train that person to succeed. Take heed; plan and think about your needs prior to beginning the interview process.

First and foremost, you need to find a person who has the same beliefs about caring for patients as you do. The person's values should match the values and the culture of your practice. You are looking for a person who is hardworking, honest, and truly appreciates the need for excellent patient care. Your new employee should share your practice's mission and want to be part of your team.

The questions you ask at an interview should allow you to learn about the candidate to help you determine whether he or she will fit the needs of the practice. The most important thing to remember is to ask open-ended questions. Stay away from questions that require a "yes" or "no" response. They do not allow you to learn about the person sitting in front of you.

The questions you ask may lead

to other questions. There will be times that you want the applicant to expand on what he or she is saying, whereas other times you will feel that you have enough information on the subject. The goal is to stay focused on what you want to get out of the interview during the allotted time.

Before you even interview a candidate, determine what type of person you are looking for to fill the position. A front desk receptionist needs to be energetic and outgoing,

to feel comfortable. This will allow him or her to open up more freely, and for you to discover the real person.

Who Are You?

Start simple: "Tell me about yourself." Listen closely to the response. How does the candidate see herself? Does the candidate limit her responses to her work achievements, or does she talk more about her personal life?

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and able to multitask. There is often a lot going on at the front desk, and that person needs to be able to stay on top of every situation. In contrast, a data entry person must be calmer and able to sit for long periods of time without many interactions. Multitasking is not as necessary as it would be for a front desk person. For that reason, it is important to know the qualities you are looking for in a candidate.

In both scenarios, working independently is necessary; therefore, you would ask questions that determine whether your candidate can work independently or whether he or she would require more support. Start your interview with casual talk. You want the candidate

You should be looking for responses about candidates' professional accomplishments, not personal information. You are hiring them for a job and you are looking for their successes. That said, when a candidate tells you about his or her personal life, listen carefully. You may get the answers to questions you are not allowed to ask.

"What do you see as your top three greatest strengths and your top three weaknesses?" This question gives you an opportunity to see how the candidate views himself. Pay as close attention to the weaknesses as to the strengths. When a candidate says that a weakness is that he is often late, it lets you know that this

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would be the expectation should you choose to hire him.

When a candidate says that she has a very high IQ, she may also be saying that she has a large ego or perhaps she is intolerant of others. This response might indicate that you should question the candidate further on the type of person she is.

Under this category, you may ask, "What is your greatest accomplishment? What was expected of you, and how did you meet or exceed that expectation?" It's a good time to ask yourself if the type of accomplishments the candidate sees as great would benefit your practice.

"Tell me how you worked with your previous co-workers. What made you a team? What didn't work with them?" This type of question begins to reveal details about the candidate's personality and how he would work with others. If you want to further expand this line of questioning, ask the candidate what frustrates him and how he resolves the frustrations.

This gives you the opportunity to evaluate how the candidate would handle the pressures of the position, including potentially irate patients.

dles being late allows you to theorize whether work is a priority for her. When she had car trouble did she find another ride, did she have her car fixed and then come to work, or did she take the entire day off?

Future Plans and Preferences

"What are your goals?" "Where do you want to be in five years?" Is the candidate thinking that he will still be at your office? Perhaps he

your practice. Are you going to be able to meet her criteria? Is what you are offering in a position something that she can live with and be happy with?

"Describe the type of work environment in which you work most efficiently and effectively." Listen carefully and you will find out how independently the applicant works. Determine what his expectations are for a work environment. The

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is thinking of going back to school? Include the question of how the candidate wants to go about expanding his knowledge and skills to benefit a role in the practice. It would give him an opportunity to share his expectations in terms of continuing education, seminars, webinars, and other work-related courses. Discuss and ask about his technology skills and how he continues to stay current in a very technological environment. Explore

chance is if he says he likes a quiet space, your busy practice may not be the place for him. Included in this type of question might be another question about the type of boss the candidate prefers to work for. Is the candidate a self-starter who prefers to be given a task and then left to do it? Or would he prefer a boss/supervisor who oversees every aspect of the assignment, thus micromanaging the employee? This question allows you to look at the culture of your practice and the type of supervisor the person would have and determine whether the candidate would fit the culture of your practice.

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It is also an opportunity to ask the applicant to describe his co-workers and what he liked and didn't like about them. It may reveal to you the types of relationships he has had and how he tends to deal with co-workers.

Facing Challenges

"Tell me about a time when you were late to work. What happened and how did you handle it?" We are all late at some point. This question is important, because how we handle ourselves speaks volumes about a person. Employees should be at work at a certain time; how someone han-

how he has learned the various electronic health records and medical management systems.

There is a strong probability that your practice uses a different software system. Does the candidate anticipate any issues learning the new system? Discuss the other technology in your office and how acquainted the candidate is with the programs you use.

"What is your perfect job?" What is the candidate looking for in a new position? Is she looking for just a job, or a potential career? Hopefully, you are looking for a long-term person who wants to find a "home" with

Patient Care Matters

"We have discussed quite a lot about you and the type of person you are and what you are looking for, but we can't forget the patient. How do you see patient care and the role you will play with the patients?" Not all employees will have direct patient contact. Some employees will work behind the scenes or have primarily telephone contact with the patients. Every aspect of patient care should be positive, however. Would the candidate you are interviewing make the needs of the patient a priority? Spend time evaluating whether this applicant would have a positive effect on your practice and on offering excellent patient experiences.

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Why Our Practice?

“Why should we hire you?”¹ This question gives the applicant another opportunity to sell herself and gives you a chance to determine whether the person in front of you would be a positive addition to the practice. Learn what she believes sets her apart from other candidates and why she believes she is the top choice. It is an opportunity to ask the candidate how her previous boss would describe her and her work ethic. Does she think her boss would hire her back if the opportunity arose? Ask her about previous co-workers. What would they say about her if asked?

“Why do you want to work in this practice?” A good candidate has done his due diligence and learned about your practice. He knows the type of practice and what your mission is. Many practices have websites, and it is easy to learn about practices via the Internet or the local hospital. Social media is another way for candidates to learn about your practice. Ask the candidate what he has learned about the practice from social media. The answers may be very enlightening.² The candidate’s answer to this question would provide an opportunity for the candidate to show his value to you and how his experiences can benefit the practice and your patients.

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Any Questions?

“Do you have any questions for me?” A quality candidate will ask questions about your practice. She will want to know what the practice’s expectations are and how the interviewer will determine who is a great candidate. The candidate may ask about the employees already working at the practice and whether there is an opportunity to meet those she would be working with. As an interviewer, you would gauge the applicant’s interest and how well she prepared for the interview. How much does she know about your practice and your specialty, and how would her skills fit in with your needs?

Conclusion

There are hundreds of questions that an interviewer can ask a candidate. It’s important to know what your goal is and what you hope to learn about the candidate. A good interviewer should be flexible and add or delete

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questions based on the answers that the candidate gives. As interviewer, prepare for the interview by understanding the role you are filling and the type of person you hope to find. It’s a combination of education, experience, skill, and personality that allows you to find the perfect employee for your practice.

Hiring and onboarding a new employee is expensive. Finding a competent, well-rounded, and successful candidate will help you save money in the end and hopefully keep the candidate for many years. Asking the right questions, searching for answers, and listening to the candidate’s responses will help determine the right candidate for your practice.

One bad employee can spoil the morale of the practice. It is worth replacing the negative, difficult ones and finding those people with good attitudes, willing to learn and to achieve the skill level to do their jobs efficiently. Your practice and your patients will benefit. **PM**

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