



The Out-of-the-Ordinary Interview

Here's how to see if your job applicants are the right fit for you.

BY LYNN HOMISAK, PRT

To Our Readers: There are no foolish questions. Chances are that if you have a question or concern in your practice, others are experiencing a similar situation. We're here to help. PM [doctor and staff] readers are encouraged to submit questions to lynn@soshms.com which will be printed and answered in this column anonymously.

Topic: 18 Favorite Interview Questions

Dear Lynn,

I feel as if my interview questions are too predictable because applicants seem to come prepared with scripted, automated responses. Are there some "out of the ordinary" questions that might probe a little deeper into their personalities to see if they are the right fit for us?

Agreed, scripted responses do not help effectively capture a prospective employee's character and qualifications. Try the following questions for job candidates. These are likely not part of standard interview 'homework' and should require some creative thinking on the part of the applicants.

1) If I met your employer at a party (non-employment setting) and your name came up, what would he/she say about you?

2) What was the worst day you had at work and how did you cope with it? Knowing what you know now, how would you have handled it differently?

3) If you had the opportunity to meet with three people (dead or

alive), who would they be and why?

4) We have narrowed the job down to two other applicants. Tell me in one word only why you would be our best choice. (Interesting to see if they follow directions and stick to the "one word" requirement.)

5) Let's assume I hire you today. What will I learn about you a couple of months down the road that I don't

where do you see yourself? After they respond, ask for three examples that substantiate their rating.

7) Why would you want this job if a paycheck wasn't an end target?

8) What are the two most influential competencies you acquired from your greatest mentor?

9) What book title would best describe your life?

The interview process should be engaging and conversational, not confrontational and certainly not discriminatory or inappropriate.

know now that might have prevented me from choosing you?

6) If you were to rate your skills on a scale of 1-10 (10 being the highest) relative to _____ (management/phone handling/billing, etc.),

10) Name something that happened recently that made you laugh.

11) How would you use the items in this room to survive on a deserted island?

12) How would you pitch working in the podiatry profession to a friend?

13) Tell me what you know about the podiatric medical profession.

14) What was it that interested you in applying for this job?

15) If we changed places and you interviewed me for this job, what would you want to know about me?

16) How does your work environment motivate you to achieve your best on-the-job performance?

17) Please tell me about yourself.

18) What question haven't I asked?



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THE CONSULTANT IS IN

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Some things to keep in mind in preparation for arranged interviews.

- The interview process should be engaging and conversational, not

and glean all you can about your next potential employee.

- Role playing is an excellent way to discover how an applicant chooses to handle potentially challenging circumstances with patients.

new employee orientation program to increase awareness.

Whether a slip-up in the front office turns out to be an “Oh, \$#@!” or simply, an “OOPSY”, it should be dealt with so it doesn’t happen again. Here are a few preventative initiatives to take:

- If a request to cancel an appointment is phoned in by someone other than the patient, require staff to get the name of the person calling and document it in the patient’s chart along with the reason for the cancellation or change.

- An updated insurance card should be required of each patient at EACH visit. It is also wise to ask

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confrontational and certainly not discriminatory or inappropriate. Don’t throw intentional curveballs.

- The interview environment should be fun to help break the ice; however, refrain from jokes. They typically don’t go over well.

- Asking applicants to “tell me about yourself” usually results in learning information you are not allowed to ask, i.e., if they are married, have children, etc.

- Other questions generally not permitted: How old are you? (or) When did you graduate from high school? Are you a U.S. citizen? Where were you born? Do you plan to get pregnant? Do you smoke or use alcohol? Do you take drugs? What is your religion? What is your height and weight? Have you ever been arrested? Do you rent or own your home? Have you ever filed for workers compensation?

- Brain teaser or puzzle-type questions (i.e., do you think zombies should be slow or fast? or, how would you move Mt. Everest?) can be fun, but can also scare (otherwise qualified) applicants away. Most often, they are pointless and a waste of time, irrelevant to the job description.

- Face-to-face interviews, if conducted properly, are extremely effective in determining whether or not an applicant is a good fit for your practice. They can help identify an individual’s commitment, problem-solving abilities, personality and behavioral reactions, motivation and stimulation, their ability to communicate, and their compatibility with your team.

- Don’t rush through the interview process. Use it to get to know

For example, set the scene. You are a dissatisfied patient insisting they have been overcharged for services, (sound familiar?) and the applicant

must deal with you. Ready? GO! How do they react to confrontation? Take note of their tone, the words they use, and their facial expressions and gestures as they respond to your grievance. Are they good listeners? Do they offer an apology and make every effort to reduce this stressful situation? Do they make excuses or offer solutions? This additional assessment should be key to your decision to hire.

- Want to see if they really do as they do and not just as they say? After your choices are narrowed down to one or two, take them each to lunch (separately). Observe how they treat the service people. Are they kind and polite or demanding and disregarding? Likely, they will treat your patients similarly.

Topic: Dealing with Mistakes

Dear Lynn,

Can you provide a “heads up” on some common minor mistakes that point to inefficiency in the front office and that we might inadvertently overlook? Thought it would be beneficial to address these in our



patients about any changes in their address, phone number, and email. Instead of getting a blanketed “nothing has changed” response, ask them to confirm what you have on file. For example, “Mrs. Jones does your phone number still end in ...4567?” “And your home address still begins, 96...?” “Please confirm your email address.” While not a front desk function, it is also wise to question medications, surgeries, and illnesses similarly with patients in the treatment room. Never assume patients recall what they’ve told you previously and what they have not. Refresh their memory by reviewing this information with them.

- Front office personnel should go out of their way to personally ac-

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knowledge and welcome the patient when they enter the office, by name, if possible.

next appointment and wind up being “lost” patients. Thinking that patients will call to make another “as soon as I get home” appointment is wishful thinking. Even with the best

Do not let patients walk out of the office without discussing their next appointment and wind up being “lost” patients.

- Taking time to review the financial policy with patients before asking them to sign it is time well spent. If they’ve already signed it, ask if they would like clarification of any of the policies before entering the original document into their record. It’s best to spell out financial policies in advance so as to prevent unnecessary conflict later.

- Do not let patients walk out of the office without discussing their

of intentions, they often fail to follow through. By getting them IN the schedule now, appropriate follow-up and documentation can occur should they cancel or not show.

- Set aside 5-10 minutes to review the schedule with the entire staff each morning. This brief communication results in less chaos, fewer interruptions, better planning, more efficiency, and improved overall operational flow.

Mistakes are bound to happen. It’s part of being human. However, as Paul “Bear” Bryant, head coach of the University of Alabama football team says, “When you make a mistake, there are only three things you should ever do about it: admit it, learn from it, and don’t repeat it.” PM

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