

# INTERVIEW INSIGHTS

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## When it comes to hiring in a tight labor market, good interview techniques can help

Prospective employees do their homework before coming in for the job interview, so it only seems fitting for the employer to prepare for the meeting as well. Not only will proper preparation assist in finding the right person for the job, it can help eliminate costly mistakes.

With the tight labor market, more and more businesses are finding themselves in an almost continual hiring mode. Knowing what you want is critical to hiring the right person for the job, says Jerry Hellebusch, president of Overland Park-based Morgan Hunter Companies, an executive search firm.

“As an employer you need, first of all, to understand what type of person you are looking for,” Mr. Hellebusch says. “If you don’t know what you need, you are not going to be able to find who you need.”

A company can begin by ensuring that its help-wanted advertisements are to the point and as detailed as possible, to avoid attracting the wrong candidates. Once the list of candidates is narrowed down, the interview becomes the primary tool an employer can use to make sure a profitable hiring decision is made. Questions are what fuel the process.

“You want to know as much about the person as possible and the resume does not usually do a person justice - good or bad,” he suggested.

Asking open-ended questions is vital to a productive interview, Mr. Hellebusch says. Some solid questions, regardless of position, include:

- Tell me about yourself? How a candidate begins will show what his or her priorities are when it comes to work, families and hobbies.
- Why did you choose (blank) as your college major or professional training? This shows whether they planned their career or just “fell into it”.
- What part of your current or most recent position did you enjoy the most? This question will let an employer assess the candidate’s reasoning, objectivity and level of detail orientation.
- Why did you leave the previous position? The answer will explain more about the person’s thought process for his or her career plans. They might be leaving a bad thing or moving toward a better thing.
- Describe a typical day in your current or last position. The response will help determine work ethic and on-the-job priorities.
- How do you prioritize your work? This provides insight into the organizational and time management skills of the individual.
- How would your peers describe you? Most of the time, this answer will lead to what candidates think of themselves.
- What kind of environment enables you to do your best? This also shows whether or not there will be a productive match between the candidate and the company.
- What kind of manager or supervisor brings out the best in you? This also shows whether or not there will be a productive match between the candidate and the company.
- What do you expect from an employer? This explains the person’s value system, and what they think is important for a company to offer.
- What are your professional goals? This shows whether or not the person is career-minded or merely taking the next job that comes along.
- How much do you know about our company? See if they have done their homework.

Beyond these basic questions, each position will require other specific questions. As long as they are open-ended as well, employers should be able to get the information they need to make a good hiring decision.