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The Savvy Manager's Go-To
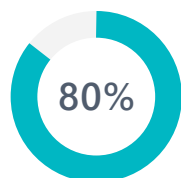
Interview Guide

Creating an engaging interview process to quickly land top talent

Introduction

Today's job seekers look for much more than just a job.

They want to work in an environment that is a strong cultural fit for them, where their work has meaning and they can achieve their personal career goals.

80% In this candidate-driven market, **80 percent** of people would take one job over another based on personal relationships formed during the interview process.[1]

Use this guide to help you ensure an engaging interview process, from preparation through offer, that appeals to the top talent you want on your team.

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Plan well

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HR leaders typically know the type of qualities to look for in a candidate.

But it's you, the department leader, who has a firm grasp of the skills, attributes, and experience necessary to fill roles on your team. Involving the right people in the interview process will cut down on the time to hire and ensure you're selecting the right candidate for the role and your team.

Three ways to work together:

1. Create a hiring team and meet before you set up interviews to discuss the job description and the perfect candidate for the role. Outline a strategy for the team to ensure you ask the right questions to guage the candidate's fit for the role.

2. Use productivity software to check every team member's availability and suggest suitable interview times that fit schedules. Send digital interview invites that can track opens and responses for easy follow-up and planning.

3. Use collaborative tools to eliminate duplicative interview questions, and share feedback after the interview to identify the top candidates.

Chapter 2

Set the stage

Set the stage

Create a positive interview experience to engage candidates from the start and leave them with a good impression of your company culture.

In fact, those who have an existing relationship with a potential employer have a much more positive experience, according to a Talent Board study.[2]

Candidates that have a great hiring experience perform well, are highly motivated, and want long-term employment with your organization.

A positive candidate experience is:

1. Transparent

From the first contact with your company, job seekers should be able to get a strong grasp of your company's culture, the criteria you're looking for in a candidate, and your timeline for filling the position.

2. Communicative

In one LinkedIn survey, **94 percent** of respondents said they want to receive feedback on their interview.[3] They also want to be clear about what to expect at each stage of the process. You can meet these expectations by setting realistic goals and informing candidates of the stages involved and when you expect to make a decision. If the process is taking longer than expected, be sure to reach out and reset expectations with the candidates that have interviewed for the role.

3. Quick

As the market for good candidates becomes tighter, **46 percent** of employers have reduced the length of their hiring process, according to one study. And **28 percent** admitted that the length of the hiring process was putting candidates off.[4] If your team is prepared up front, the process will move more quickly, provide an exceptional experience, and ensure you select the best fit for your team.

It takes an average of 42 days to fill an open position.[5] Although you don't want to rush it, waiting too long between interview rounds can result in losing your top candidate to a competitor.

Chapter 3
Ask the right questions

Ask the right questions

The questions you ask in an interview will help you determine which candidate is the best fit for your organization, and will also provide the candidate with insight into your company's culture and the type of leadership to expect as a potential employee.

A negative interview experience will change **83 percent** of candidates' minds.

Negative experience

☹ ████████████████████████ 83%

A positive experience will change **87 percent** of candidates' minds.[6]

Positive experience

☺ ██████████████████████████ 87%

Today's job seekers are vetting your company in the same way that you're vetting them. **According to LinkedIn, company culture and values are what attract potential candidates.**[7]

An important step of a successful interview is to ask the right questions. Lofty questions, such as "What are your long-term goals?" or "What is your greatest weakness?" are proof that you're not prepared, and present you as an employer-centric organization.

Instead, ask functional questions that provide insight into how a candidate solves problems, such as:

1. "Tell me about a time you went above and beyond the call of duty in your last job."

2. "Have you ever worked with a difficult colleague? How did you manage that relationship?"

3. "How would you handle an unmotivated team member?"

Before ending an interview, candidates will typically ask a few questions about the position and the company.

Be prepared to answer at least the following:

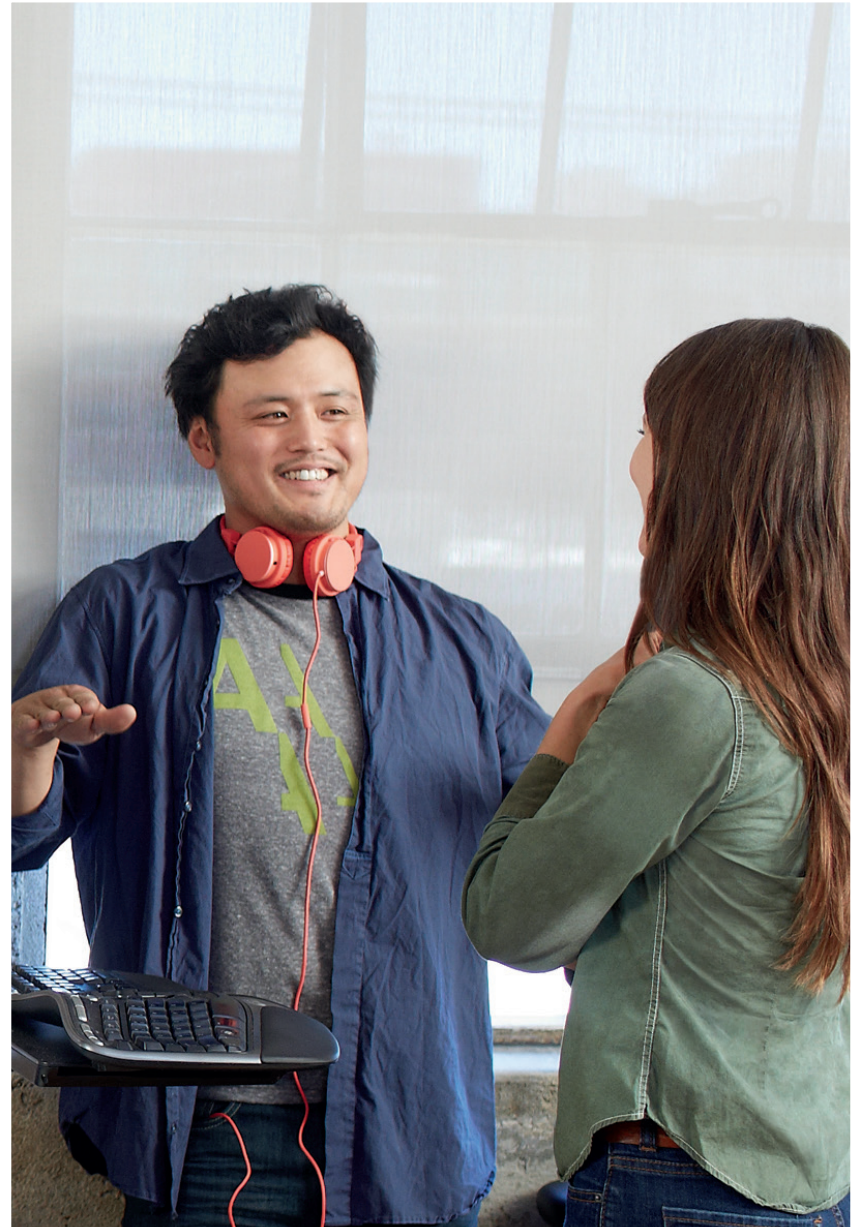1. **"What is the culture like here?"**

   Be ready to share a story that shows your company's culture.

2. **"What are your expectations for a new employee's first 90 days?"**

   Be sure you have a strong understanding of the position's expectations.

3. **"How does this position impact the overall success of your company?"**

   Understand how the role aligns to your company mission, vision, and goals.

Chapter 4

Evaluate carefully

Evaluate carefully

The candidate's answers to your interview questions will provide information about the job seeker's talents, skills, and expertise.

You can also gather additional facts based on the words they choose and the way they answer specific questions.

A few red flags to watch for:

1. **Negativity.** Candidates who place blame on their colleagues, past employers, or customers may have a difficult time accepting responsibility for their actions. A singular focus on their own successes could mean they don't work well in a team environment and tend to take all the credit for a job well done.

2. **Spotty work history.** Holes in work history could mean a potential employee is purposefully leaving out jobs that didn't end well. Be sure to ask about any timeframes unaccounted for in a résumé.

3. **Deflecting.** Although nerves sometimes play a part in how candidates respond, changing the subject or avoiding an answer to your interview questions may signify that an interviewee is trying to hide a lack of skills.

Rather than basing your decision on one interview alone, build a robust profile for a complete picture of each candidate.

Gather facts from every available source, including:

- Online assessments that gauge skills, personality, and culture fit for the role and your team

- Résumés

- Candidate portfolios

- Job applications

- References

Creating an engaging candidate experience is not only important for selecting the best talent for your current position. It can also help you down the road, in the event of an unexpected job opening, future short-term projects, or company growth. Candidates that have an great experience will be more willing to interview for future roles. Building a comprehensive candidate pipeline will help you further decrease the time-to-hire.

Chapter 5
Close the deal

Close the deal

The final stage of the interview process is to select the candidate who is the best fit for your organization, team, and the position.

There is more to this stage of the process than extending an offer to the right potential employee.

Rejection is one of the core elements of the hiring process that requires a rethink.

Reframing the way in which you reject candidates who are not offered a position will have an impact on your employer brand image and help you stay competitive in a constantly changing talent landscape.

Two ways to reshape the way you decline candidates:

1. Personalize it

Although sending each candidate a formal rejection letter is a good practice, most are highly formulaic and lack a personal touch. The note should be straightforward, but gracious. Let the candidate know that while they weren't the right fit for the particular position, you appreciate their time. If possible, call out a quality you and your team were impressed by to help the candidate focus on the positive. Respect and consideration go a long way in how you will be perceived now and in the future.

2. Store it

If the candidate was not the right fit for the position but was a strong cultural fit for your organization, let them know and ask if you can keep their information on file for potential future openings. This will help you ensure a strong candidate pipeline.
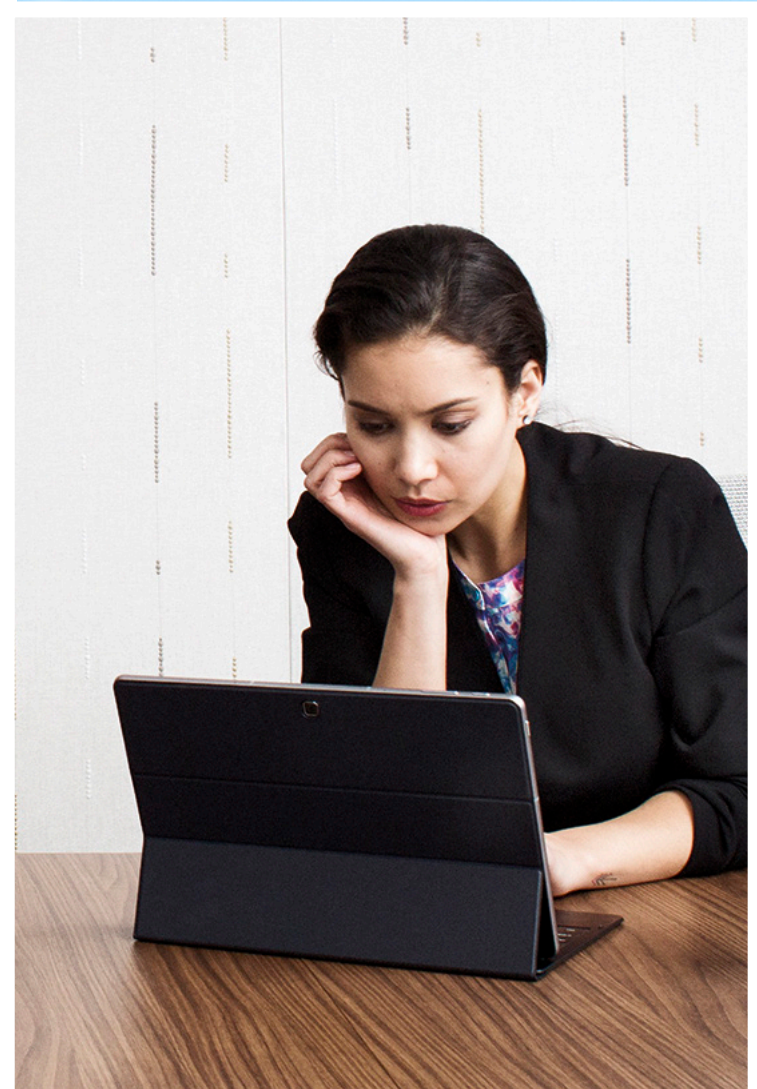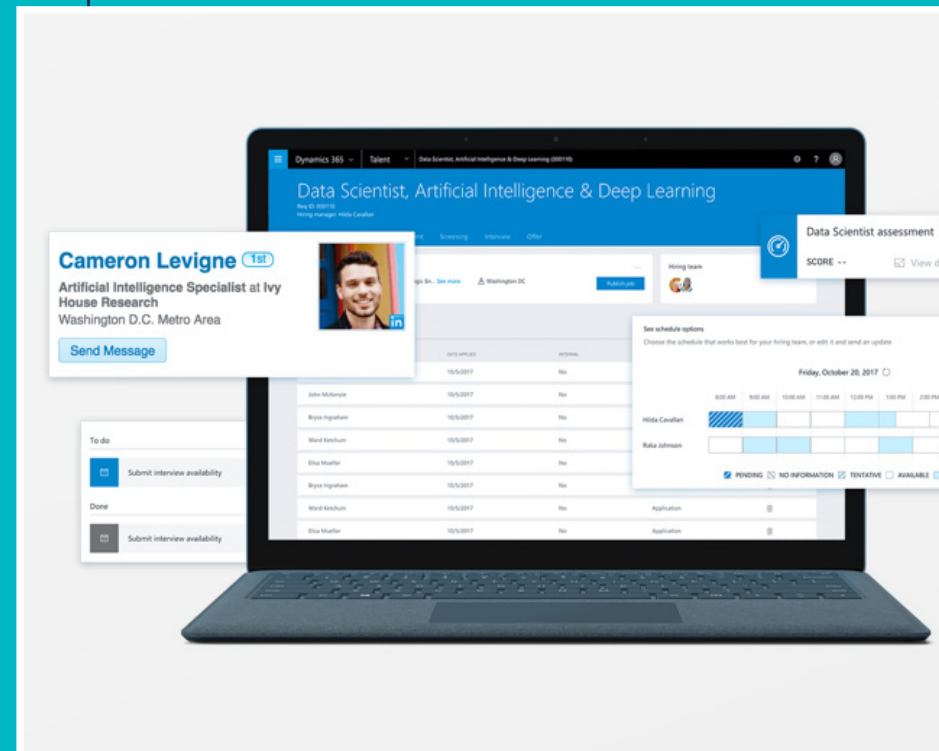
Conclusion

The success of your team starts with hiring the right people. Build high-performance teams with an engaging interview process.

Take the next step in innovating your hiring process, download a fully functional trial of **Microsoft Dynamics 365 for Talent: Attract.**

Download now

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2. http://www.thetalentboard.org/wpcontent/uploads/2016/02/2015_NAM_Talent_Board_Candidate_Experience_Research_Report_FINAL_160208.pdf

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