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# 10 Tips for Narrowing the Field When Hiring

To ensure a fair and effective hiring process, employers should develop a standardized hiring system that will help narrow the applicant pool and highlight qualified candidates. In this week's Tip, you will read 10 helpful hints for developing and implementing a hiring process.

Employers often invest significant resources to recruit and hire high caliber employees. To ensure a fair and effective hiring process, employers should develop a standardized hiring system that will help narrow the applicant pool and highlight qualified candidates. Employers should establish practices for reviewing candidates' resumes, employment applications, and responses to pre-screening questions, as well as for conducting interviews.

The following are 10 tips for developing and implementing a hiring process:

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## **Establish a standardized hiring process.**

Fact: Unless specific federal and state requirements are met, all workers, including those working on a temporary basis, must be considered employees. In fact, whether workers are classified as independent contractors or employees under federal or state law depends on the facts of each case. The IRS, Department of Labor, and many states have developed their own tests for determining independent contractor status. Employers should carefully review each test as it relates to their temporary workers and consult legal counsel before classifying temporary workers as independent contractors.

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## **Develop selection criteria and be consistent.**

Define the qualifications candidates need by drafting detailed job descriptions. Once these qualifications have been established, make sure the same job-related criteria are required of every applicant. In addition, to ensure fair and accurate comparisons, make the same pre-employment inquiries to all candidates for a given position.

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## **Keep nondiscrimination laws in mind.**

Employers should be mindful of federal, state and local nondiscrimination laws when engaging in the screening, selection and hiring process. Under federal law, employers are prohibited from discriminating against employees and applicants on the basis of race, color, religion, age, sex, pregnancy, national origin, citizenship, disability, genetic information, and military status. Many states and local jurisdictions have additional protections. Keeping in mind these anti-discrimination laws, employers should avoid questions that would directly or indirectly reveal a job candidate's membership in a protected class.

#### **Carefully review resumes.**

Employers should carefully review resumes to assess a candidate's employment history, skills and accomplishments. When reviewing resumes, consider the following questions: Are the candidate's previous positions consistent with the requirements of your open position? Is the resume thoughtful, well organized, and free of typographical errors? Resumes provide employers with information that the applicant wants to share. It is therefore a good idea to review resumes in conjunction with an employment application and other pre-employment assessments.

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#### **Request an application.**

When conducting a search for a new employee, employers should have candidates complete a job application. Applications allow employers to collect and review information about a potential employee's work history, educational background, and qualifications in a standardized way. This will help ensure that the employer looks at the same information from every applicant and uses the same criteria when making hiring decisions. A well-crafted job application will also provide employers with job-related information that is often excluded from resumes, such as reasons for leaving previous jobs and salary history.

#### **Draft pre-screening questions.**

Employers may wish to use pre-screening questions before an interview to help assess whether an applicant has the minimum qualifications required to perform the job. When drafting pre-screening questions, employers should keep in mind that the questions should be job-related and tailored to the specific requirements of the position. For instance, if you are hiring a customer service representative, consider asking candidates to explain a time that they helped resolve a particularly difficult customer service issue. Employers should use the same pre-screening questions for all applicants applying for a particular position to ensure that each applicant is evaluated with the same criteria.

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#### **Conduct a telephone screen.**

After you have narrowed down your list of applicants to those that meet the minimum job-related requirements, consider conducting a phone interview before devoting the time to an in-person interview. Phone interviews are generally relatively short and should focus on clarifying questions based on the candidate's resume, job application, or other pre-screening information.

### **Consider video interviews, when appropriate.**

Employers may also consider conducting a video interview prior to scheduling an in-person interview, when appropriate. Where geographic limitations make it difficult to schedule an in-person meeting, video interviews can help the interviewer evaluate the candidate by assessing nonverbal cues, such as eye contact, energy, and overall poise, which may not be evident during a phone interview. In our next Tip of the Week, we will provide best practices for conducting video interviews.

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### **Conduct in-person interviews.**

Where possible, employers should meet in person with the candidates that have successfully completed the phone and/or video interview stage. When conducting the in-person interview, interviewers should consider asking questions that elicit how the candidate has handled situations in the past that are similar to what they would experience on the job. Interviewers should avoid questions that are not job-related, as well as those that have the potential to reveal the candidate's status in a protected class.

### **Consider video interviews, when appropriate.**

Upon completion of the screening and interview process, employers should review all information gathered on all applicants and evaluate each candidate based on their qualifications as they relate to the open position. Once you have made your selection decision, extend an offer contingent on any other necessary pre-employment steps, such as a reference check, background check, or drug test. It is always a best practice (and the law in certain states and local jurisdictions) to wait to conduct these checks and tests until after you have extended a conditional offer. Check your state and local law to ensure compliance with pre-employment screenings such as background checks.

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Employers have many tools available to help gather information and narrow the field when making hiring decisions. When evaluating which candidate is the best fit for an open position, remember to review the applicant data gathered during the pre-screening and the interview process carefully, apply hiring criteria consistently, and consider only job-related factors when making hiring decisions.

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