

# GETTING STARTED

## Chapter 4 EFFECTIVE HIRING

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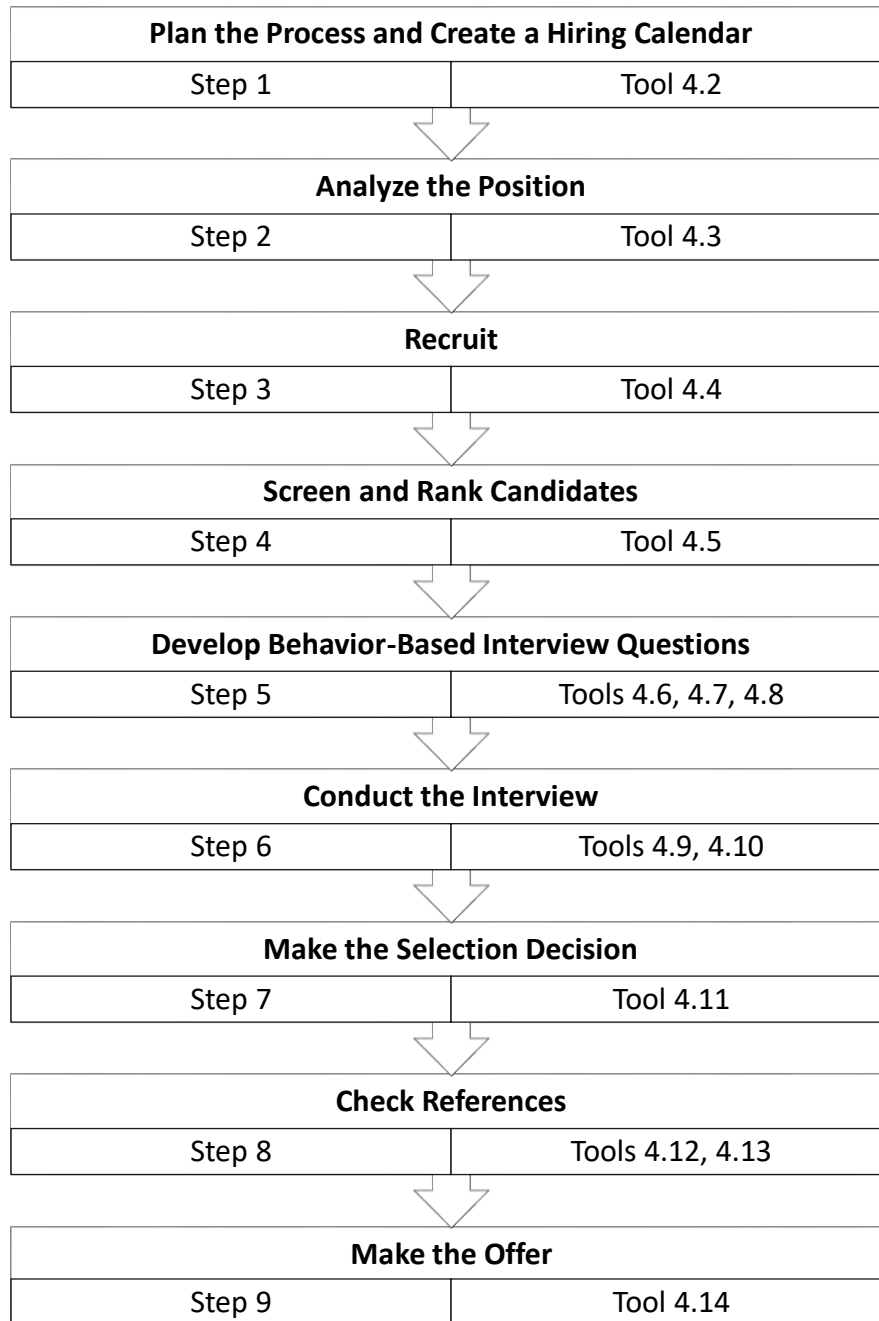
**Nothing we do is more important than hiring  
and developing people.**

*Lawrence Bossidy  
Author & former COO of GE*

## 4.1 Hiring Process Overview

**ABOUT THIS TOOL**—Hiring well requires managers to make it a priority. Follow the sequence described here for a fair and efficient approach, one that enhances the prospect of a successful outcome: a talented new employee bringing fresh energy and insights to your team.

**APPLICATION**—Study the steps below, then consult with your HR partner or recruiter. Consider how best to involve your team, the new employee’s co-workers, in planning and hiring.



Source: Developed by the author

## 4.2 STEP 1—Plan the Process and Create a Hiring Calendar

**ABOUT THIS TOOL**—Each step of the hiring process takes time and occurs in the midst of multiple competing priorities. Answering these planning questions and creating a hiring calendar makes for a realistic timeframe and minimizes the prospect of last minute snags that can delay the process and potentially lose talented candidates.

**APPLICATION**—Work through these questions while developing a hiring calendar for the position you wish to fill.

### PLANNING QUESTIONS

#### WHO will be involved?

- Screening
- Recruiting
- Interviewing
- Reference checking
- Selecting

#### WHAT is your budget?

- Advertising
- Candidate travel & lodging
- Interviewing expenses
- Salary budget
- External services?
- Relocation (Yes? No? %?)

#### WHAT does the interview day look like?

- Date(s)
- Greeter? Host?
- 1:1 interviews, panel(s), both?
- Writing task? Test? Presentation?
- Meet-and-greet or Q&A forum?

#### WHERE will you recruit?

- Your organization's websites
- Industry and professional association websites and journals
- LinkedIn
- Internally
- With partners

### SAMPLE HIRING CALENDAR FOR A THREE-MONTH PROCESS

*Continues on next page*

April				
6 <i>Update job description</i>	7 <i>Create selection calendar</i>	8 <i>Submit requisition</i>	9	10
13	14 <i>Prepare position announcement</i>	15	16 <i>Schedule interview panelists</i>	17
20 <i>Post position</i>	21 <i>Recruit, recruit, recruit!</i>	22	23	24
27	28	29	30 <i>Prepare interview questions</i>	

*SAMPLE HIRING CALENDAR (CONTINUED)*

<b>May</b>				
4	5 <i>Start screening applications</i>	6	7	8
11	12 <i>Complete screening of applications</i>	13	14 <i>Invite top applicants to interview</i>	15
18	19	20 <i>First interviews</i>	21 <i>First interviews</i>	22
25	26 <i>Invite top candidates for second interview</i>	27	28 <i>Complete second interview</i>	29
<b>June</b>				
1	2 <i>Inform top candidate of preliminary decision; ask for references</i>	3	4 <i>Start reference checking</i>	5
8	9 <i>Complete reference checking; Obtain approval for salary offer</i>	10 <i>Offer candidate position</i>	11 <i>Hear back from candidate [They give 2 weeks' notice]</i>	12
15 <i>Notify finalists of selection decision</i>	16	17 <i>Prepare onboarding plan</i>	18	19
22	23	24	25	26
29 <i>New Employee Starts!</i>	30			

Source: Developed by the author

### 4.3 STEP 2—Analyze the Position

**ABOUT THIS TOOL**—Filling a vacant or new position is an opportunity to define exactly what you’re looking for in terms of technical, interpersonal, and leadership skills. Carefully analyzing what’s needed in the position serves as the foundation for a well-designed process, effective recruiting, and a successful interview.

**APPLICATION**—Use these questions as prompts for updating the job description. You’ll be using the results for recruiting, interviewing, and onboarding.

#### Update the Job Description

- What is really needed?
- What are the core accountabilities and deliverables?
- What possibilities does the position offer the organization and employee?

#### Identify Key Competencies

- What technical and business skills and abilities are needed to do the job successfully?

#### Describe Critical Behaviors

- What interpersonal qualities are needed given the complexity of interactions of this position?
- In what ways will this position have a leadership role?

#### Specify Experience and Education Levels

- What minimum experience and education levels make sense?
- Caution! The higher the qualifications the fewer the applicants.

Source: Developed by the author

## 4.4 STEP 3—Recruit

**ABOUT THIS TOOL**—A clear and fair hiring process necessitates an open and competitive recruitment. Finding the right candidate is more about the quality of applicants than the quantity. Worry less about casting a broad net and more about targeting promising individuals and talent pools.

**APPLICATION**—Follow these steps to deliberately attract the candidates who best match the needs of the position.

### Experiment

- *Experiment* with different tools and websites such as LinkedIn, local papers and field-specific websites and publications.
- Consult with your HR recruiter and other managers for advice on where to advertise and promote the opening.

### Communicate

- *Communicate* key functions of the position, minimum qualifications, application deadline and other pertinent information.
- Maintain a consistent look and feel to all advertisements, using the organization's logo when appropriate.

### Reach Out

- Encourage colleagues to *reach out* to their networks.
- Use listservs and networks of other hiring managers.
- Contact leadership in professional and community organizations.
- Give recruiting materials to colleagues attending workshops and conferences.

### Track

- *Track* where top candidates learned about the position and save data for future openings.
- Keep *track* of money spent on each recruiting activity.

Source: Developed by the author

## 4.5 STEP 4—Screen and Rank Candidates

**ABOUT THIS TOOL**—A ranking sheet is a useful tool to score resumes, keep track of candidate information, and document your screening and selection decisions. Weighting relatively more important criteria can help differentiate top candidates.

**APPLICATION**—Create a ranking sheet for the position using criteria based on the requirements for the position.

### Sample ranking sheet

Applicant	Education (Bachelors = 1 pt Masters = 2 pts)	Relevant Competencies (1 pt)	Relevant Work Experience (1 pt)	Score	Meets Min. Quals?	Interview?
Candidate #1	1	0	0	1	No	No
Candidate #2	2	1	1	4	Yes	Yes

### Other areas to consider

*Writing, Spelling and  
Grammar*

*Bonus Skills*

*Previous History with  
Your Organization*

*Relocation Needs*

Source: Developed by the author

## 4.6 STEP 5—Develop Behavior-Based Interview Questions

**ABOUT THIS TOOL**—Behavior-based interview questions presume that a candidate’s past performance is the best indicator of future performance. Behavior-based questions ask the candidate how they have handled situations in the past similar to those they will encounter in the position they’re seeking. In contrast, scenario questions ask candidates to speculate how they will handle hypothetical situations, revealing little about the individual’s actual track record.

**APPLICATION**—Study the sample below, then create your own list of critical behaviors and related behavior-based questions. See Tool 4.7 for more ideas.

Sample behavioral analysis and behavior-based questions for a Recruiter.

Behaviors Critical to Success	Possible Question
1. Patience; keeping cool under pressure	Tell me about a time when you worked effectively under pressure.
2. Flexibility; open to exploring	Give me an example of when you had to change work midstream because of changing organizational priorities.
3. Skilled recruiter	Tell me about a difficult recruitment and how you went about finding the best candidate in the timeframe the hiring manager needed.
4. Superior communication skills, both interpersonally and in writing	Describe a presentation you successfully prepared and delivered to a person in authority.
5. Superior analytical, people, and problem-solving skills	Tell me about a time when you had to analyze facts quickly, define key issues, and respond immediately.
6. Excellent organizational skills	Describe your responsibilities for planning and organizing in your current position.
7. Awareness, tenacity, and diligence	Describe how you’ve dealt with the biggest challenges in your current/recent role.

### ADDITIONAL TIPS

**FORMAT**—Behavior-based questions typically begin with one of the following phrases:

- Tell me about a time...
- Describe...
- Give me an example...

### USEFUL FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

- What was the outcome?
- What might you do differently next time?
- What did you learn?
- How did others react?

Source: Developed by the author



## 4.7 50 Behavior-Based Interview Questions

*If You're Looking For Behaviors That Revolve Around...*

### **LEADERSHIP**

1. Tell me about a time when you accomplished something significant that wouldn't have happened if you had not been there to make it happen.
2. Tell me about a time when you were able to step into a situation, take charge, muster support, and achieve good results.
3. Describe for me a time when you may have been disappointed in your behavior.
4. Tell me about a time when you had to discipline or fire a friend.
5. Tell me about a time when you've had to develop leaders under you.

### **INITIATIVE AND FOLLOW-THROUGH**

1. Give me an example of a situation where you had to overcome major obstacles to achieve your objectives.
2. Tell me about a goal that you set that took a long time to achieve or that you are still working toward.
3. Tell me about a time when you won (or lost) an important contract.
4. Tell me about a time when you used your political savvy to push a program through that you really believed in.
5. Tell me about a situation that you had significant impact on because of your follow-through.

### **THINKING AND PROBLEM-SOLVING**

1. Tell me about a time when you had to analyze facts quickly, define key issues, and respond immediately or develop a plan that produced good results.
2. If you had to do that activity over again, how would you do it differently?
3. Describe for me a situation where you may have missed an obvious solution to a problem.
4. Tell me about a time when you anticipated potential problems and developed preventative measures.
5. Tell me about a time when you surmounted a major obstacle.

### **COMMUNICATION**

1. Tell me about a time when you had to present a proposal to a person in authority and were able to do this successfully
2. Tell me about a situation where you had to be persuasive and sell your idea to someone else.
3. Describe for me a situation where you persuaded team members to do things your way. What was the effect?
4. Tell me about a time when you were tolerant of an opinion that was different from yours.

### **WORKING EFFECTIVELY WITH OTHERS**

1. Give me an example that would show that you've been able to develop and maintain productive relations with others, though there were differing points of view.
2. Tell me about a time when you were able to motivate others to get the desired results.
3. Tell me about a difficult situation with a co-worker, and how you handled it.
4. Tell me about a time when you played an integral role in getting a team (or workgroup) back on track.

### **WORK QUALITY**

1. Tell me about a time when you wrote a report that was well received. What do you attribute that to?

2. Tell me about a time when you wrote a report that was not well received. What do you attribute that to?
3. Tell me about a specific project or program that you were involved with that resulted in improvement in a major work area.
4. Tell me about a time when you set your sights too high (or too low).

#### **CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION**

1. Tell me about a situation in which you were able to find a new and better way of doing something significant.
2. Tell me about a time when you were creative in solving a problem.
3. Describe a time when you were able to come up with new ideas that were key to the success of some activity or project.
4. Tell me about a time when you had to bring out the creativity in others.

#### **PRIORITY-SETTING**

1. Tell me about a time when you had to balance competing priorities and did so successfully.
2. Tell me about a time when you had to pick out the most important things in some activity and make sure those got done.
3. Tell me about a time that you prioritized the elements of a complicated project.
4. Tell me about a time when you got bogged down in the details of a project.

#### **DECISION-MAKING**

1. Describe for me a time when you had to make an important decision with limited facts.
2. Tell me about a time when you were forced to make an unpopular decision.
3. Describe for me a time when you had to adapt to a difficult situation. What did you do?
4. Tell me about a time when you made a bad decision.
5. Tell me about a time when you hired (or fired) the wrong person.

#### **ABILITY TO WORK IN VARYING WORK CONDITIONS (STRESS, CHANGING DEADLINES, ETC.)**

1. Tell me about a time when you worked effectively under pressure.
2. Tell me about a time when you were unable to complete a project on time.
3. Tell me about a time when you had to change work midstream because of changing organizational priorities.
4. Describe for me what you do to handle stressful situations.

#### **DELEGATION**

1. Tell me about a time when you delegated a project effectively.
2. Tell me about a time when you did a poor job of delegating.
3. Describe for me a time when you had to delegate to a person with a full workload, and how you went about doing it.

#### **CUSTOMER SERVICE**

1. Tell me about a time when you had to deal with an irate customer.
2. Tell me about one or two customer-service related programs that you've done that you're particularly proud of.
3. Tell me about a time when you made a lasting, positive impression on a customer.

Source: Lin Gensing-Pophal, *Human Resource Essentials*, (Alexandria, VA: Society for Human Resource Management, 2002), 243-246

## 4.8 Guidelines for Appropriate Questions (USA)

**ABOUT THIS TOOL**—In the United States, no employment decision may be based on race, sex/gender, color, national origin, age, religion, military or veteran status, disability, marital status, creed, sexual orientation, gender identity, political ideology.

**APPLICATION**—Review this tool with all interviewers prior to the interviews commencing.

Subject	Questions to Avoid	Possible alternative
<b>National Origin / Citizenship</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are you a US citizen?</li> <li>• What is your citizenship?</li> <li>• What country are you originally from?</li> <li>• What is your “native” tongue?</li> <li>• Are you first or second generation in America?</li> <li>• What kind of name is Quigtar?</li> <li>• What kind of accent is that?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are you legally authorized to work in the United States?</li> <li>• What languages do you speak and/or write fluently? (If you ask this question, be sure you ask every interviewee and only if it is job related.)</li> </ul>
<b>Religion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you attend church on Sundays?</li> <li>• What religious holidays do you observe?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This job requires you to work on weekends and/or holidays. Is that a problem for you? (Remember you may have to accommodate employees whose religious observance conflicts with work schedules.)</li> </ul>
<b>Disability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you have a disability?</li> <li>• Can you perform the essential functions of the job with reasonable accommodation?</li> <li>• Do you have any illnesses or mental health problems?</li> <li>• Have you had any work-related injuries?</li> <li>• Have you ever filed a worker’s compensation claim?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Here’s a list of the job’s essential functions. Can you perform the job with or without accommodations? (You can ask candidates to describe how they would perform the job as long as you ask all the candidates.)</li> </ul>
<b>Off-hour activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you smoke?</li> <li>• Do you drink alcohol?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Don’t ask.</li> </ul>
<b>Memberships and professional affiliations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What clubs and organizations do you belong to?</li> <li>• Are you a member of a union?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What professional memberships do you have that you believe are relevant to the performance of this job?</li> </ul>
<b>Marital Status and Family</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are you married?</li> <li>• What does your spouse do?</li> <li>• Shall I call you Ms., Miss, or Mrs.?</li> <li>• Do you live alone?</li> <li>• Tell me about your children.</li> <li>• Is your family excited about the relocation?</li> <li>• Does your spouse mind you traveling?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Don’t ask.</li> </ul>

<b>Children</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you have children?</li> <li>• When are you due (to pregnant candidate)?</li> <li>• Will you have to make childcare arrangements when you travel?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can you work overtime?</li> <li>• Are you willing to relocate?</li> <li>• This job requires weekend and holiday work; can you do that?</li> </ul>
<b>Sex</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would you have a problem working primarily with women/men?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Don't ask</li> </ul>
<b>Age</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How old are you?</li> <li>• What's your date of birth?</li> <li>• When did you graduate from high school/college?</li> <li>• Are you near retirement age?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are you of legal age to work?</li> <li>• Are you over the age of 18?</li> </ul>

Source: Adapted from Washington State Administrative Code (WAC) 162-12-140 Preemployment inquiries

## 4.9 STEP 6—Conduct the Interview

**ABOUT THIS TOOL—**The interview process begins the future employee’s relationship with the organization. How it is designed and managed will leave a lasting impression on candidates and interviewers alike. It will also influence the acceptance decision of the preferred candidate.

**APPLICATION—**Follow these proven steps in conducting your selection interviews.

### **Getting the Interview Started: Welcome & Introductions**

- Ask rapport-building questions to put the candidate at ease
- Describe the process and timeline for the recruitment
- Discuss the job at the beginning of the interview
- Provide a description of the team and work environment
- Ask the candidate what questions they have about the position

### **During the Interview: Support & Guide**

- Take notes and explain why you are taking them
- Maintain control
- Be patient
- Allow silence
- Clarify the intent of questions, if needed

### **Asking Questions**

- Ask behavior-based questions about job-related experience
- Ask the candidate questions about their resume
- Press for specifics
- Thank them, without offering feedback on performance

### **After the Interview: Assess**

- Consult all interviewers; ask them about the candidate’s:
  - Experience and qualifications
  - Characteristics and abilities
  - Interpersonal skills
- Assess the process: Did the questions elicit the information and insights you needed? Did the process reflect well on the organization? Were the candidates treated with dignity and respect?

Source: Adapted from *More Than a Gut Feeling III*, by Dr. Paul Green, CRM Learning, 2000.

## 4.10 Evaluating Candidate Answers: Look for STARs and PARs

**ABOUT THIS TOOL**—Two simple frameworks help interviewers evaluate how thoroughly candidates answer the questions posed to them. The STAR method works well in considering answers to behavior-based questions, the approach described in Tool 4.6. PAR is well-suited when candidates describe a problem they've encountered.

**APPLICATION**—Share this tool with all interviewers; use it to critically evaluate candidate answers.

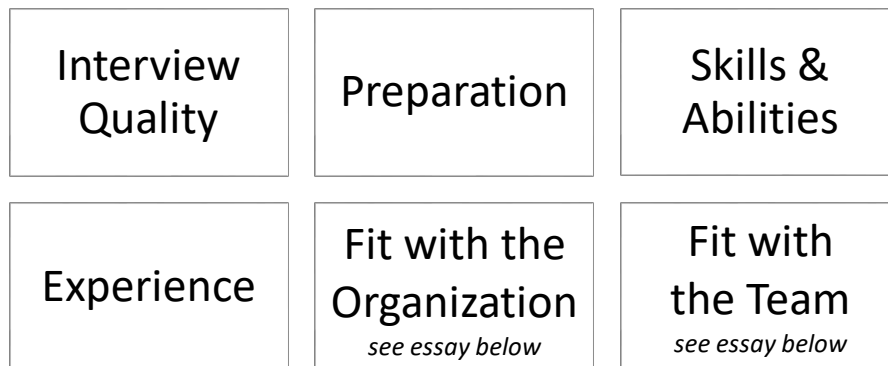
<b>S</b>	<b>Situation</b>	Is the situation described by the candidate responsive to the focus or intent of the behavior-based question?
<b>T</b>	<b>Task</b>	Was the candidate clear and specific about the task for which they were responsible in responding to the situation?
<b>A</b>	<b>Action</b>	Was the candidate clear about what exactly they did in contributing to the outcome?
<b>R</b>	<b>Result</b>	Did the candidate describe the outcome, what resulted from their actions? Did they highlight what they learned?
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<b>P</b>	<b>Problem</b>	Did the candidate describe the problem clearly and concisely?
<b>A</b>	<b>Action</b>	Was the candidate clear and specific about the actions they took in constructively addressing the problem?
<b>R</b>	<b>Result</b>	Did the candidate describe the result concretely? To what extent was the problem solved or mitigated? What did the candidate learn?

Source: Discussion with Bryan Verity, HR Director, International Training & Education Center for Health (I-TECH), University of Washington, 2018

## 4.11 STEP 7—Make the Selection Decision; The Challenge of Fit

**ABOUT THIS TOOL**—Deciding who to hire is challenging! Consider the totality of your experience with the candidates. Be sure to get input from every interviewer before making your final decision.

**APPLICATION**—Consider these six factors in evaluating the final candidates and deciding who to hire.



### The Importance & Challenge of “Fit”

Hiring managers must consider a potential candidate’s fit with the culture of the organization and team. Yet, in doing so, the potential for discriminatory decisions looms large, as well as the risk of perpetuating a culture of sameness and conformity. What to do?

First, be specific about what is meant by culture. Ideally, it is the alignment of employee behaviors with the mission and values of the organization. Describe the culture as objectively and specifically as possible. What is the evidence of the culture that characterizes your organization and your team—not just the espoused values, but the observable, day-to-day behaviors?

Second, describe the culture to the candidates in recruitment materials, screening interviews, and when you meet them in person. Include behavior-based, culturally specific questions in the interview (Tools 4.6, 4.7). For example, if respect is an organizational value, you could ask, “Give me an example that shows you’ve been able to develop and maintain productive relations with others, though there were differing points of view.”<sup>1</sup>

Third, know your own hidden biases. Take the Race IAT (Implicit Association Test) available for free at Harvard’s Project Implicit [www.implicit.harvard.edu](http://www.implicit.harvard.edu). Use the results to check your instincts as you proceed through the selection process.

Fourth, challenge your decision before finalizing it. What did the candidate say or do that demonstrates their fit with your culture? How might hidden biases be influencing your inclinations?

Source: Developed by the author

<sup>1</sup> Lin Gresing-Pophal, *Human Resource Essentials*, (Alexandria, VA: Society for Human Resource Management, 2002), p. 244

## 4.12 STEP 8—Check References

**ABOUT THIS TOOL**—References should be from professionals, not family members. Similar to interviewing, reference check questions should ask the reference how the candidate behaved. Questions should be driven by the position competencies.

**APPLICATION**—Use these tips and adapt the Sample Telephone Reference Check Questions (Tool 4.13) to get the most useful feedback on your potential new hire.

### Tips for good reference checks

Check three  
professional  
references

Write out  
behavior-based  
reference  
questions  
beforehand

Use the  
position's  
competencies  
as your guide

#### Example

*Competency:* Works well under pressure.

*Behavioral Reference Question:* “Please provide an example of how [the candidate] demonstrated the ability to work in a fast paced, ever changing environment.”

Source: Developed by the author



## 4.13 Sample Telephone Reference Check Questions

*Ask the reference: "I wish to verify some of the information given to us by [Applicant], who is being considered for employment at [Organization] as a [Position Title]."*

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### GENERAL REFERENCE QUESTIONS

1. What is his/her job title and primary responsibilities? Dates of employment?
2. How would you describe the quality of his/her work?
3. How well did he/she respond to pressure (e.g., from high volume, deadlines, multiple tasks, public contact)?
4. How well did he/she plan and organize his/her work, and were assignments typically completed on time?
5. What was the amount of supervision required for him/her?
6. How well did he/she get along with other people (e.g., clients, co-workers, supervisors)?
7. How did he/she respond to criticism/interpersonal conflict?
8. What are his/her strongest skills as an employee?
9. What areas of his/her performance would benefit from further development?

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### QUESTIONS SPECIFIC TO THE NEW POSITION

Questions addressing specific duties of this particular position should be included. For example, such questions might cover one or more of the following areas:

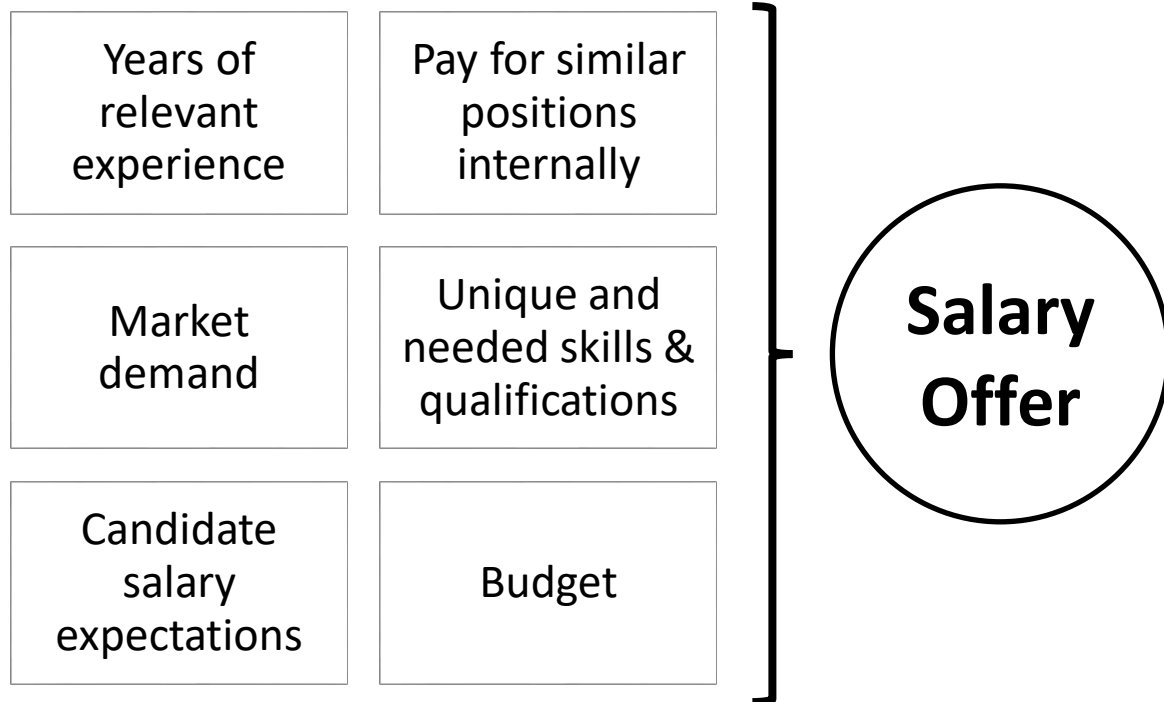
- ❖ Technical knowledge or skills applicable to this type of work
- ❖ Experience in the applicable professional field
- ❖ Managerial/supervisory experience
- ❖ Fiscal/budget management
- ❖ Computer applications (software, hardware, operating systems, etc.)
- ❖ Program development and project management
- ❖ Communication skills, both written and verbal
- ❖ Interpreting and applying rules and regulations
- ❖ Presentations and public speaking

Source: Adapted from "Telephone Reference Check Form," University of Washington,  
[https://hr.uw.edu/ops/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/telephone.check\\_form.pdf](https://hr.uw.edu/ops/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/telephone.check_form.pdf)

#### 4.14 STEP 9—Make the Offer

**ABOUT THIS TOOL—**Money matters to both the new employee and the organization. As you consider what to offer the employee, keep the “hidden paycheck” in mind, not just the salary itself. That is, be clear about the benefits, culture, work environment, and professional development opportunities the new employee will enjoy.

**APPLICATION—**Use these six factors and work with your HR department, if you have one, in determining what to offer the new employee and the flexibility you have in negotiating the starting salary.



Source: Developed by the author

## 4.15 Summary: Best Practices for Hiring

Planning	Recruitment & Advertising	Ranking	Interviewing	Select & Offer
Start early	Use the organization's website	Use the job description as the basis for your ranking	<i>Remember!</i> Job analysis <u>precedes</u> question development	Consider technical and non-technical competencies
Create a hiring calendar	Leverage your networks	Weight criteria based on relevance to success	Use behavior-based questions	Consider candidate's characteristics
Determine your budget for advertising, candidate travel, possible relocation	Assess candidates using measurable requirements	Avoid assumptions or guessing at motivations	Be warm and welcoming, introduce interview team, outline the process	Consider candidate's experience
Analyze the job and update job description	Market the position, organization, environment, etc.	Create a ranking sheet to keep track of candidates	Let the candidate ask questions	Conduct reference checks; pay attention to hesitations, ask follow-up questions
Decide who to involve and their role	Announce the opportunity to staff and appropriate partners	Select top 2 – 4 for one opening	Discuss the candidates with the interview team immediately	Consider fit in the organization
Hire for multiple positions at the same time	Provide informational interviews	Use cover letter as a writing sample	Describe why candidates would want to work here	Set a realistic start date
Start to prepare for new employee	Use LinkedIn; reach out to colleagues	Clarify gaps, inconsistencies, changing jobs	Help keep candidates on track	Debrief with panelists and document decision
Design annual hiring plan if you expect multiple hires	Send information about the organization and team	Notify candidates not selected for interview	Follow up with all those interviewed personally	Be consistent and fair

Source: Developed by the author