

Phone Interview Guide

Phone interviews can help you gain additional information about candidates who stood out during the selection question process. The purpose of the phone interview is to learn more about the candidates in order to narrow your applicant pool and decide who you'd like to bring in for an in-person interview.

This guide outlines steps and provides resources that will help you successfully prepare for and conduct phone interviews.

STEP 1: Inviting Candidates to Interview

The selection question process helps you identify the candidates with who you would like to conduct phone interviews. Your next step is to invite them to participate in a phone interview. Phone interviews generally take 15-20 minutes, so it is recommended to block off 30 minutes for each call. Once you have chosen the dates and times for interviews, send the information to candidates via email. Use the sample email below as a reference.



Thank you for applying to the **[Job Title]** position. We are excited about your interest in this role and would like to conduct a phone interview to learn a bit more about you on **[Month, Day, Year & Time]**.

Please reply to this email by **[Month, Day, Year]** to confirm that this time works for you. Please also include a phone number that is best to reach you.

We look forward to speaking with you soon!

Attracting & Hiring Exceptional Talent

Phone Interview Guide

STEP 3: Prepare Behavioral Interview & Follow-up Questions

Once you've asked any general questions, the remainder of your phone interview should focus on asking 1-2 behavioral interview questions. These questions allow you to learn more about how your candidate has behaved in the past, which helps you better predict how they might behave in the future.

For example, if your Success Profile lists the ability to work well with others as a fixed expectation, you might choose to ask a question like:

Sometimes team members don't always perform equally. Tell me about a time you have been on a team when an individual wasn't performing well. What was the situation? How did you deal with it, and what was the outcome?

It's also important to choose or create follow-up questions to get more information that might not be given in the initial answer.

For additional information about behavioral interviewing or follow-up questions, watch the module "Conducting Phone Interviews – Behavioral Interview Questions" in the *Attracting and Hiring Exceptional Talent* course. When you're ready, use the information on the following pages to choose and/or create the behavioral interview and follow-up questions you want to ask during your phone interviews.

Attracting & Hiring Exceptional Talent

Phone Interview Guide

Sample Behavioral Interview Questions

Behavioral Interview Questions	Follow-up Question(s)
Tell me about a time when you have been part of a big change that happened in your job or at your workplace. What was the change, how did you contribute and did the change go well?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did many people resist the change? • What was your role in making the change happen? • How did you feel about the change?
Often in a workplace, an individual can show up with a bad attitude or in a bad mood and it can affect those around them. Describe a situation where you have seen that happen and what did you do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was the effect on the team? • Were you able to help the person change their mood? • What did the other team members do?
Tell me about a time when you have set concrete work goals for yourself. What goals did you set, how did you measure progress, and did you achieve those goals?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did you get any support with progress toward your goals? • Did you set additional goals after you achieved them? • How did you communicate your goals to your manager?
Tell me about a time when you have gone above and beyond your specific job duties to help the team improve, the business get better, or to get work done more effectively. What specifically did you do and what happened because you did it?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was the effect on the team? • Did you need to check with anyone else before taking that action? • How did others around you respond to your actions?
Often in a fast-paced veterinary hospital there are differences of opinion or even personalities that clash. Tell me about a time when you had a conflict with another person. What was the situation, how did you deal with it, and what was the outcome?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did the relationship change? • What was the effect on the team? • How did you feel about the situation afterwards?
Sometimes team members don't always perform equally. Tell me about a time when you have been on a team when an individual wasn't performing well. What did you do to help and what was the outcome?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was the effect on the team? • Did the performance improve and if so how?

Attracting & Hiring Exceptional Talent

Phone Interview Guide

Behavioral Interview Questions	Follow-up Question(s)
Sometimes as you go through the day you can come up with ideas for improvements or ways to make things better or more effective. Tell me about a time when you have had an idea for improvement and how you approached getting that idea implemented.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How was your idea received? • Did the idea get implemented? • Did you come up with additional ideas after that?
It can be challenging in a fast-paced environment to make enough time for training and team improvement. Tell me about a time when you had to learn something informally in order to do your job better. What did you need to learn and how did you go about learning it?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What challenges did you face as you were trying to learn? • Did you teach anyone else afterwards? If so, who?
Have you ever been singled out or rewarded for your achievements, accomplishments, or contributions at work? If so, tell me what the accomplishments were and how you were rewarded.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have there been other times as well? • Were others on the team rewarded for similar achievements?
A new job presents many challenges and opportunities, but integrating isn't always easy. Tell me about a time when you have joined a new team or organization. What were the challenges and how did you deal with the situation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was the hardest part about integrating into an existing team? • How did you build relationships with the other team members?
Tell me about a time when you had an extremely challenging day at work. What caused it to be such a tough day? How did you handle it?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have there been a lot of tough days on the job? • How did you manage to recover from that? • Were others having a tough day too?
Almost all of us have to deal with supervisors and managers and sometimes that can be a challenge. Tell me about a time when you disagreed with a manager or supervisor. What happened and how did you handle it? What was the outcome?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did you discuss the situation with the manager? • How was it resolved? • Did others feel the same way about the decision?

Attracting & Hiring Exceptional Talent

Phone Interview Guide

Behavioral Interview Questions	Follow-up Question(s)
Tell me about a time when you had to make a change at work. Why did you feel the change was needed? How did you make the change and what were the results? What did you learn from that experience?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was this change mandated or did you make the change proactively? • What did you learn from making this change? • Do you feel that you have more ability to be adaptable because of this experience?
Tell me about a time when someone asked you to do something you didn't think was appropriate. What was the most challenging part of this situation? How did you respond? What happened to the relationship?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why was this situation challenging for you? • Do you feel that you resolved this situation well? • How was this situation resolved?
Often in veterinary medicine we are faced with challenges of how to balance the best care for the pet with what we believe the pet owner can afford. How have you balanced that in the past and what guides your decision making in those situations? How have you handled situations where clients stated that they simply can't afford the care their pet?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did pet care or cost guide your initial thinking? • Were you able to maintain a positive relationship with the client when having this conversation?
What have you done to foster the growth of a team or an organization? What was your unique contribution? What was the result?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did your effort make a difference? • Was your contribution recognized by others?
Have you ever worked on a pet care team that you believed needed to be more effective or more efficient? What did you do and what were the results?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you describe specific examples of how you contributed to the team's improvement? • How did you approach the team to initiate a change?
What is more important in veterinary medicine, being able to care for more pets or devoting more time to each pet to ensure effective care? How do you balance the competing priorities of quality and speed when it comes to pet care?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why do you feel this way? • How does your approach to pet care affect clients and the practice?

Attracting & Hiring Exceptional Talent

Phone Interview Guide

Behavioral Interview Questions	Follow-up Question(s)
Tell me about a time when you have taken accountability for the outcome of a situation involving others. What was the situation and what did you do to help create a positive outcome?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did you engage others to improve performance? • Did you involve others and solicit ideas and input?
Think of a time when there was a poor performer on your team. How did you handle the situation and what were the results?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did you address the performance issues quickly? • Did the poor performance affect the performance of others and how did you handle this? • Did you provide coaching to help this person improve their performance?
How would you articulate a vision for the ultimate veterinary hospital? Describe in your words what that hospital would be like?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you feel that this vision would inspire others and create engagement? Why?
What steps have you taken in the past to create a strong team culture and a high performance environment? How did it affect team performance?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you inspire a team? • How would you describe your approach to leading a high-performing team?
In the fast-paced world of veterinary medicine, it's easy to make mistakes. Tell me about a time when you made a mistake that had significant consequences. What mistake did you make? What were the results? What did you do to prevent similar mistakes in the future? What did you learn from the experience?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you feel that this mistake could have been prevented? • What did you do to remedy this situation? • Did your mistake affect others? Do you feel that others appreciated how you handled the situation?

Attracting & Hiring Exceptional Talent

Phone Interview Guide

Create Your Own Behavioral Interview Questions

If you find that none of the sample behavioral interview questions on pages 4-7 meet your needs, you can build your own questions based on information captured in your Success Profile. When creating these questions, be sure they focus on “*how have you,*” not “*how would you.*” Asking a question starting with “*how have you,*” or “*tell me about a time*” helps to identify patterns or habits that candidates already have. This is a much better indicator of how candidates might perform in your practice than how they think they might handle a situation in the future.

Behavioral Interview Question
<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Follow-up Question: _____• Follow-up Question: _____• Follow-up Question: _____

Behavioral Interview Question
<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Follow-up Question: _____• Follow-up Question: _____• Follow-up Question: _____

Attracting & Hiring Exceptional Talent

Phone Interview Guide

STEP 4: Prepare Your Rating Scale

During the phone interview, use the rating scale below to quickly and efficiently record your impressions of candidate answers. Using these numerical ratings, you can analyze and compare each candidate's fit in a more concrete way.

1 - 2	3	4 - 5
<p>Did not fully answer the question, was not able to articulate a response.</p> <p>Answered the question, but gave a response that clearly was not in alignment with our culture or practices.</p>	<p>Gave an adequate answer, had some level of detail, and was able to provide some specifics.</p> <p>The answer was on target with regard to what we are looking for and aligned with the role, profile, and our culture.</p>	<p>The answer was specific, thorough, and the candidate gave a complete and detailed account of the situation and the results.</p> <p>The candidate demonstrated that he or she would significantly contribute to helping the practice, improving the culture, and would be an asset to our business.</p>

STEP 5: Prepare Your Rating Sheet

The *Phone Interview Rating Sheet* on page 10 provides a place for you to record your scores and take notes about candidate responses during the phone interview. It also includes a place for you to mark any “red flag” responses. A red flag response is something a candidate says that makes it extremely unlikely that they will be a good fit for your practice.

Use the rating sheet on the following page, along with the rating scale above, during the phone interview to record information.

Attracting & Hiring Exceptional Talent

Phone Interview Guide

Phone Interview Rating Sheet

Candidate Name	Interviewer

Behavioral Interview Question	Follow-Up Question(s)
Notes	Red Flag Responses
Rating (1-5)	

Behavioral Interview Question	Follow-Up Question(s)
Notes	Red Flag Responses
Rating (1-5)	

Attracting & Hiring Exceptional Talent

Phone Interview Guide

STEP 6: Practicing Behavioral Interviewing

If you have limited experience with behavioral interviews, try conducting a mock phone interview with one or more of your top performing employees prior to interviewing candidates.

Ask your top performers to play the role of a candidate. Conduct the mock interview like you would the real thing: start with introductions, then ask your behavioral interview and follow-up questions. When you are finished, ask the employees to provide feedback on how you executed the questions.

Tips for Conducting Your Interview

When you're ready to conduct your phone interviews, follow the tips below to ensure they go smoothly:

- Start with introductions. You want your candidates to be as relaxed as possible, so start by sharing a bit about yourself and reiterating your excitement about interviewing them for the role. Feel free to ask some very brief, general questions that allow them to get comfortable and build rapport.
- Ask behavioral interview questions. Be sure to rate your candidates' answers and make notes about their responses.
- Ask any additional questions you have based on the candidate's answers during the interview or their resume. Also, be sure to allow your candidate an opportunity to ask questions they may have.
- End by letting your candidate know you are interviewing other people and will be in touch when a decision is made about who you'll be moving forward with for in-person interviews.