



Questions to Ask and Avoid When Interviewing

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Finding good applicants is difficult these days, you don't want to make a mistake and choose the wrong employee because you didn't conduct an effective interview. Here are a few basics to get you started on the right track.

Prior to interviewing any perspective employee, you will need to know what you are looking for in an employee. You should plan for a well-rounded team, one that will appeal to a broad range of patients and have the ability to respond to a variety of situations. You will need **task masters**, those who focus on dotting every "I" and crossing every "T", we love these employees as insurance billers and technicians but often task masters don't enjoy the art of selling, they prefer more structure. For the optician position, you will want some of those task master skills but they will need to have a healthy dose of **social skills**. The front desk position will require the ability to **multi-task** and remaining **calm** in stressful environments. The chances of finding one personality to fill all your practice needs are unrealistic. Plan for diversity and have a strong office manager to manage the complexity.

Here are a few basic questions that need to be asked when interviewing applicants.

- **What could you do to enable a patient to have a positive experience in our practice?**

There are no wrong answers. Has the applicant given any thought to what they could bring to your practice? Are they passive and waiting to be told how to behave and what to do? How much social training are you willing to offer?

- **What do you need to perform at your best?**

The answers to this question can run the gamut, some people love attention and positive affirmation, others want autonomy and to be left alone. As a manager make sure your work environment can accommodate this. If your practice is a pressure cooker focused on improving through negative feedback, don't hire that person in need of regular affirmation. If your doctor loves control, reconsider hiring someone who wants the authority to act alone.

- **If a patient arrived, upset and complaining, how would you handle it?**

The answer to this will tell you just how independent and self-reliant an employee will be. If you want problems handled at the front line, look for someone who is willing to take on that challenge. If you prefer someone who will look to their manager for answers and follow directions, look for that response.

- **Tell me about your day-to-day activities at your last position?**

Are they articulate, well spoken, and organized in their thought process? Those would be great skills in any position in the practice. Or do they struggle to come up with a description and appear not to understand why you're asking. You will need to know what type of employee you are looking for, someone who is driven and self-directed or someone who will follow structure and do what they are told. This questions targets those abilities.

- **Describe your ideal co-worker.**

There are no wrong answers here, simply listen to what the applicant says. Think about what your team needs. Are they currently too social and need someone to drive the focus to work by avoiding chit chat? Then look for that response. Or has the team become too task oriented and needs someone to bring in some lightness and a little fun? Either way you can get a better idea of the applicant by asking the question and listening well.

In all interview situations there is give and take, just make sure you have an idea of what you want and need and don't fall into the trap of asking old tired questions that will give a pre-programmed response by the interviewee.

Here are a few to avoid:

- Are you a team player? Who says no to that question? A better plan is define what a team player means to you and ask those questions.
- Do you give good customer service? Again, no one says no to that. Ask them to give an example of a customer service situation in which they are proud.
- Are you dependable? I place high value on dependability, but if you are looking for dependable and ask if they are dependable, they will tell you they are dependable. I would suggest you ask, how many work days did they missed in their last position? Would their previous employer say they arrived on time, always, often, most of the time, rarely?

Remember your best skill as an interviewer is listening; you are looking for the right person for your practice, not convincing someone to choose you. Talk half as much as you do now, don't telegraph the "right" answer to your interviewee, give them the ability to talk about themselves and you read the signals.