Tips for Reviewing the Applications of Job Applicants

Before you hold hiring interviews, the first impression you will get of job candidates will be from reviewing their application. You need to have a plan in place for reviewing applications to help you choose the right candidate for the job. Start by knowing exactly what you want from the person while on the job. Review the position’s job classification so that the job’s knowledges, skills, abilities, and duties are fresh in your mind. It’s also a good idea to think about the strengths and weaknesses of past incumbents in this position. This will provide you with a solid idea of what to look for in a candidate. Keep all this information in mind and use it as the framework for your evaluation.

**APPLICATION REVIEWING GUIDELINES**

- **Set aside a block of time.** It helps to review applications back-to-back so that you can more easily compare the candidates’ qualifications.
- **Use common sense.** If the position requires great attention to detail but the application contains several typos, that’s a good indicator that the candidate would not be a good fit for the position.
- **Confirm employment history.** Calling past employers can provide you with insight into the type of worker the candidate is. Listen carefully to the tone the employer uses while discussing the candidate.
- **Take notes.** Review the candidate’s education and experience, as relevant to the position, and make quick notes as you go. These notes will help you quickly compare the candidates’ qualifications and will be a useful reference during the interviews.
- **Check multiple references.** Obtaining more than one reference allows you to compare responses for consistency, thereby obtaining a more complete view of the candidate in question. It can also help you verify information contained in the application.

**RED FLAGS TO LOOK FOR**

- Careless mistakes
- Employment gaps
- Indications of decreasing responsibility or a career plateau
- Short-term employment with several jobs
- Numerous shifts in career paths

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While these red flags might not all be immediate deal breakers, they signal issues that you want to look into further. It’s important to look for these red flags in advance of the interviews so that you can be prepared to ask questions in order to investigate any potential problems.

Careful review of job applications by the hiring department is an essential step in the hiring process. Make sure you set aside time for reviewing applications well ahead of the scheduled interviews. Limiting your review to a quick scan right before meeting the candidate will not be as effective as a thorough evaluation performed prior to holding the interviews. The latter will provide you with the opportunity to question potential employees about application details that raise red flags.