



## Conducting the Interview

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Dear Reader:

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We hope this information will be useful to you; reference to it will assist you with many of the questions that will arise in your tenure with municipal government. However, the *Tennessee Code Annotated* and other relevant laws or regulations should always be consulted before any action is taken based upon the contents of this document.

Please feel free to contact us if you have questions or comments regarding this information or any other MTAS website material.

Sincerely,

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## Conducting the Interview

**Reference Number:** MTAS-1409

It is important to emphasize the importance of conducting each interview in a fair and equitable manner. It is not possible to develop identical interview situations, but every effort should be made to ensure a basic consistency in the interview format. This does not mean that concerns specific to a particular candidate cannot or should not be pursued. The interview is exactly the right time to do that.

What are the basic goals of interviewing for management and professional positions? There are two, and they must be kept uppermost in mind at all times:

- To determine if the candidate has the technical competence, experience, and skills to do the job you want done, in the way you want it done
- To determine if the candidate has the personal qualities and characteristics that fit the needs of the organization and the community

The interview begins by you welcoming the candidate and making him or her feel comfortable. Open the interview by highlighting the job description and reviewing with the candidates the salient features of their resumes. Allow and encourage candidates to tell you about themselves. Keep in mind that the interview is a two-way street. Both parties are buyers and both are sellers. As the potential employer, you must be prepared to answer legitimate questions. If a candidate does not ask you any questions, you have good reason to be concerned about that candidate's seriousness. Allow at least one-third of the total interview time for the candidate's questions and for your responses.

The uppermost concern of most job candidates is "Is this the right job for me?" The questions directed to you and the answers you give are significant because they will help the candidate make a decision on that most important of questions. In answering, be honest and straightforward. Anything short of honesty is a disservice to your own organization and grossly unfair to the candidate. Answering the question "Is this the right job for me?" is as important to you as it is to the candidate. If you are an inexperienced interviewer, there are a number of common pitfalls that you should be aware of and avoid. These include:

- Asking leading questions
- Making decisions too early in the interview
- Failing to properly relate questions and answers to job requirements (the job description)
- Talking too much and listening too little. The candidate should do at least 75 percent of the talking
- Failing to manage the interview. Keep it on track and under control
- Allowing one factor, positive or negative, to exert undue influence. Try to consider the person within the total framework of his personality and professional competency
- Failing to probe and ask follow-up questions when a response is incomplete or confusing
- Judging the candidate solely on personality

There are many legal concerns and questions related to hiring. Visit the section entitled "Interviewing and the Law" to get more detailed information regarding questions that can be asked during an interview.

During the interview do everything you can to get the whole story, the big picture and all the basic questions answered to your satisfaction. At the conclusion of the interview complete the interview evaluation form. It is not unusual that more than one interview with the same candidate may be necessary or desirable.

As you continue to narrow the field and to really zero in on one or two applicants, a second or third interview can be productive and decisive. Do what is necessary to completely achieve the two primary objectives of the interview. Do not ask questions regarding religion, ethnicity, health, marital status, dependents or politics.

## Sample Interview Questions

**Reference Number:** MTAS-1410

1. What interests you most about the position?
  2. What are your personal and professional strengths?
  3. Why do you want to leave your present job?
  4. What aspects of this job would you most enjoy?
  5. Tell us about some major accomplishments you have achieved in your present position.
  6. In your view, what is the most important aspect of this job?
  7. What qualifies you to manage a department with \_\_\_\_ employees and an operating budget of million?
  8. What are your personal and professional goals?
  9. How would you describe your own personality?
  10. If we walked up and down Main Street of the community you now serve, what would the business community and the public tell us about you?
  11. What do your subordinates think of you?
  12. What are the characteristics you look for when hiring people?
  13. Have you terminated employees?
  14. How would you go about terminating a key employee?
  15. Describe your management philosophy and style.
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**Source URL (retrieved on 05/25/2020 - 2:50pm):** <https://www.mtas.tennessee.edu/reference/conducting-interview>



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