Minnesota West
COMMUNITY & TECHNICAL COLLEGE

Canby • Granite Falls • Jackson
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Centers in: Fairmont, Luverne, Marshall, Redwood Falls

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CONFIDENTIALITY
IN THE SEARCH COMMITTEE PROCESS

Congratulations on your role as a member of the College search committee!

One of the critical aspects of the search process is ensuring confidentiality to applicants as provided under the law. This memo is intended to assist in understanding your responsibility in maintaining confidentiality. Any questions about this issue should be directed to the search committee chair.

1. Complete confidentiality in the search process, in accordance with the law, is essential in order to attract qualified candidates who trust that their information will not be prematurely disclosed, and to ensure compliance with applicable laws.

2. Search committee members will have access to private personnel data, and each search committee member must take all necessary precautions to safeguard the information received.

3. The Minnesota Government Data Practices Act (MGDPA) governs "personnel data" collected, created, received, maintained or disseminated by a governmental entity such as MnSCU. Personnel data includes information on both applicants for positions and employees. Minnesota Statutes sections 13.03, 13.43.

4. Under the MGDPA, certain personnel data are private, other information is public. Determination of what is public data will be made by the Search Chair in coordination with college and system office officials.

5. The identity of *all* applicants is private except for those who become finalists.

6. Private data on applicants must not be discussed or shared with *anyone* outside the screening committee except as specifically authorized by the search chair.

7. Identity of applicants is permanently protected, except for those who become finalists as determined by the search chair. *Names of applicants must never be released or shared with others, even after the search process is complete.*

8. Certain information about applicants is public, but must be separated out from information that would identify an applicant. The search chair, in coordination with college or system office officials, will determine what information should be released if it is requested by a member of the public.

9. Personal liability: "Any person who willfully violates the provisions of this chapter or any rules adopted under this chapter is guilty of a misdemeanor. Willful violation of this chapter by any public employee constitutes just cause for suspension without pay or

dismissal of the public employee." Minnesota Statutes section 13.09. In addition, the College could be subject to civil damages for violations of these requirements.

10.   Additional considerations in the search process:

   a. Be sure to protect data so that others cannot gain access. For example, take care if making photocopies of search data, safeguard information that might be visible in the office or at home, and avoid discussing information where others might overhear it, such as in hallways or elevators.

   b. If you are contacted by someone who wishes to discuss a candidate, refer the caller to the search chair. Do not acknowledge whether the person is an applicant.

   c. The search committee chair will approve any information about the search that search committee members are permitted to share with others.

   d. Avoid statements about precise numbers of candidates or the exact timetable, since those may change.

   e. Be careful when taking notes in interviews, filling out evaluation forms, etc. Consider only information that is relevant to the process—for example, whether the candidate has the necessary experience, education and skills for the position.

   f. Communication about the search process in general is an important aspect of your role, even though you are limited in providing data about specific applicants. Frequently search committees decide at the end of each meeting what information should be made available to others, to keep the university community up to date on the process.

Lastly it is required that all search committee members view the video "Maintaining Confidentiality in the Search Process" which can be found at http://www.hr.mnscu.edu/video/confidentialsearchprocess/index2.html Review of the video must occur prior to any work on review of application material.

Please do not hesitate to consult with the chair if any questions arise concerning confidentiality.

Best wishes in the search process!

Policy Number	Subject:	MnSCU Reference	Procedure Number	Effective Date
4.10	Faculty Hiring			7/1/2003

HUMAN RESOURCES
Faculty Hiring Plan

Minnesota West Community and Technical College will adhere to the procedure for hiring faculty as defined in the May, 2001, procedure below. All faculty positions will be filled with qualified faculty.

1. Requests to fill permanent full-time and permanent part-time instructional positions will be brought forth by the Vice President of Academic Affairs for approval by the College President.

2. A committee chair will be appointed by the Vice President of Academic Affairs. The committee chair will facilitate the formation of a search committee. The Chair will contact bargaining unit representatives for their committee selection, but may also solicit committee members if necessary. The Human Resource Department is available to help in the committee formation if requested. All members of the committee will be voting members. The committee membership should reflect the diversity of the College community. The committee will include a minimum of five to seven members and whenever possible should be comprised of:

   ➢ Vice President of Academic Affairs/designee
   ➢ Campus CEO or Appropriate Administrator
   ➢ Three faculty – with at least one being from the same assigned field or area of licensure
   ➢ Constituents (one student and one non-faculty staff)

3. The committee chair will work with the Director of Human Resource/designee to prepare the vacancy notice and advertisement. The Director of Human Resources/designee will send the advertisement to local and national publications, appropriate individuals, protected group agencies/publications, college graduate placement offices and/or other places as needed or requested.

4. The Director of Human Resources/designee will submit the vacancy notice to MnSCU for posting in the MnSCU bulletin. Vacancy notices will be sent to laid off faculty in the area of licensure or assigned field for possible claiming within the posting period. All applicants for full-time and part-time positions will be required to submit copies of their transcripts and work experience with their application materials. Official transcripts will be required for all new permanent full-time or part-time hires.

5. The Human Resources Office will maintain a log of all applications received and develop a file of all applications for search committee review.

6. The Human Resource Office will send the Supplemental Data Form (used to identify protected class applicants) to each applicant. The form will be returned to the Affirmative Action Officer.

7. The Affirmative Action Officer will maintain a confidential log of all protected class applicants. The Affirmative Action Officer will review the applicant pool to determine whether the pool contains sufficient diversity. If the Affirmative Action Officer determines that the applicant pool is sufficiently diverse, he/she authorizes the continuation of the hiring process. If the Affirmative Action Officer determines that the pool is not sufficiently diverse, he/she discusses it with the President. The Affirmative Action Officer will make a determination of whether to continue with the hiring process or suspend it while attempts are made to enhance the diversity of the applicant pool.

8. The Director of Human Resources will alert the committee to any internal unlimited part-time or unlimited full-time applicants. In accordance with the faculty contracts, all such applicants must be interviewed and considered.

9. Once the Affirmative Action Officer approves the applicant pool, the search committee will review all applications and select applicants to be interviewed. No arrangements to interview any applicant will be made until the Affirmative Action Officer has approved the list of applicants to be interviewed.

10. Human Resource staff will communicate with the semi-finalists to set up an interview date and time. The Human Resource Office will provide notification to committee members of interview dates and times, and will assist in facilitating the interview process.

11. If an applicant with a disability inquires about reasonable accommodation, the Human Resources Office should be notified immediately. The Director of Human Resources will work to provide necessary accommodations.

12. The committee will develop job related interview questions to learn about necessary abilities and job related factors. These questions may concern the applicant's previous education and work experience, interest in the job duties and willingness to accept the working conditions, or they may be based on hypothetical situations where the applicants is asked to tell how they might handle a particular problem. The Human Resources Director is available to help the committee with creating the questions, if requested.

13. Interviewing Guidelines: Federal and state laws, regulations and court decisions in the area of equal opportunity all support the necessity for employment interviews which are job related, standardized, and objective.

    The search committee will develop criteria, procedures and interview questions for the evaluation of applicants. The Affirmative Action Officer will review this material to protect against possible bias. The Director of Human Resources will review the questions for appropriateness. It is important to remember that everything should be the same, as much as

possible, for each candidate. Applicants could perceive differences in the interview setting as unfair.

Enough time should be scheduled so that each candidate can provide complete answers to all of the interview questions and to allow time to review prior to the next interview. Begin the interview by trying to put each candidate at ease and introduce all of the committee members. Using the interview question documents, ask the same job related questions of all candidates and record the major points of their answers.

The committee may also incorporate additional components into the interview process that will provide a demonstration of the applicant's abilities, skills and/or knowledge. For example, it is common for applicants for faculty positions to perform a teaching demonstration.

14. The committee chair/designee will conduct reference checks on each of the finalists after the submission of the committee's recommendation. The committee chair/designee will communicate strengths and weaknesses of the selected candidates and should submit written assessments of the candidates along with the results of references checks when a hiring recommendation is made.

15. The Vice President of Academic Affairs/designee will submit the recommendations of the search committee to the President and Director of Human Resources. A minimum of two final candidates should be recommended. Recommendation on salary placement, for MSCF faculty positions, should be given to the President as well.

16. The President will select the person to fill the position. The Human Resource Director/Designee will extend the offer.

17. After the employment offer has been accepted, the Human Resources Office will be responsible for notifying all other applicants.

18. All search committee materials, i.e. ratings, any other notes, and all applicant files will be returned immediately to the Director of Human Resources after the employment offer has been accepted.

19. The Human Resources Office will maintain records/documents of the search process for a minimum of three years.

Date	**Vice President**	**Date**
Date	**President**	**Date**

Policy Number	Subject:	MnSCU Reference	Procedure Number	Effective Date
4.11	Non Faculty Hiring			7/1/2003

HUMAN RESOURCES
Non-Faculty Hiring Plan

Purpose: It shall be the goal of the college to recruit and maintain the highest quality employees. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that in fulfilling this goal the college adheres to all contractual and legal requirements, and promotes diversity in all of its search and selection processes. The Director of Human Resources, the Affirmative Action Officer or committee representative, and the appropriate Administrator will be involved in all phases of the search process to ensure this commitment is maintained. This commitment challenges us to affirmatively seek candidates of protected classes, without regard to age and from many cultural backgrounds.

Implementation: Human Resources, Administrators, Supervisors, Affirmative Action Officer.

Section 1: Approval of Position
All requests to fill vacancies for full-time permanent, or temporary and part-time permanent positions, are to be brought forward in writing by the appropriate Administrator. The justification should be submitted to the Director of Human Resources who will bring the position to the President for approval/denial. The President will make the final decision about the position.

The appropriate Administrator or Supervisor will review the position description of existing positions for accuracy and update as needed. If the position is new, the supervisor will draft the position description. The Human Resource Office may provide assistance in preparing the position description, if requested. New positions will require an audit for classification purposes.

Section 2: The Search Chair & Committee

1. The chair of the committee will be the appropriate Administrator or Supervisor of the vacant position. The chair shall work with the department staff and unions to establish a search committee upon approval of the position. The committee should consist of members who have in-field expertise and an ability to commit to the process. The Human Resource Department is available to assist in the committee formation if requested. The committee should include representatives from the affected bargaining unit. The search committee shall have at least four members, including the chair.

2. All members of the search committee must agree to make themselves available during all aspects of the hiring process, or they should not serve. The committee members must agree to maintain confidentiality during the entire search and interview process and take an active role in all aspects of the search for qualified candidates.

Section 3: Posting/Advertising

1. The Director of Human Resources/designee will post the vacancy as directed by the language in the applicable collective bargaining agreement.

2. If it is necessary to recruit candidates, the committee will work with the Director of Human Resources/designee to post vacancy notices in the MnSCU Employment Opportunities, minority publications, and selected newspapers. The Human Resource Office will obtain the appropriate list of eligible candidates from the Department of Employee Relations (DOER).

Section 4: Applicant Pool Certification

1. The applicant pool for classified positions is determined and certified by the DOER list. The Human Resources Office will ensure all applications are complete and will prepare copies of resumes for the committees screening process.

2. For unclassified non-list hires, the applicant pool will consist of all internal and external applicants solicited through the post/advertising process.

Section 5: Screening

1. The screening criterion is developed from the posting or recruitment advertisement and committee discussion prior to the review of the applications. Each committee member will review all the applicant files using the agreed upon criteria and make a recommendation to the committee. The search committee will meet and, through discussion, work to identify the semifinalists to be interviewed.

Section 6: Interview

1. The Human Resources staff will contact all semi-finalists to arrange the interviews. Provided adequate time exists the candidates will be sent a confirmation of the interview date and time, a position description, a parking permit, and any materials requested by the committee.

2. The committee will develop job related interview questions to learn about the applicant's abilities. The Affirmative Action Officer will review this material to protect against possible bias. The Director of Human Resources will review the questions for appropriateness. It is important to remember that everything should be the same, as much as possible, for each candidate. Applicants could perceive differences in the interviewing setting as unfair. Questions may concern the applicant's previous education and work experience, interest in the job duties and willingness to accept the working conditions, or they may be based on hypothetical situations where the applicants are asked to tell how they might handle a particular problem. The Human Resources Director is available to help the committee with creating the questions, if requested.

3. Interviewing Guidelines: Federal and state laws, regulations and court decisions in the area of equal opportunity all support the necessity for employment interviews that are job related, standardized, and objective.

Enough time should be scheduled so that each candidate can provide complete answers to all of the interview questions and to allow time to review prior to the next interview. Begin the interview by trying to put each candidate at ease and introduce all of the committee members. Using the interview question documents, ask the same job related questions of all candidates and record the major points of their answers.

The committee may also incorporate additional components into the interview process that will provide a demonstration of the applicant's abilities, skills and/or knowledge.

Section 7: Recommendation of Finalists

1. After the interviews, the search committee will determine which of the semifinalists meet all the criteria and are acceptable. A minimum of two final candidates should be recommended.

2. The committee chair/designee will conduct reference checks on each of the finalists after the submission of the committee's recommendation. The committee chair/designee will communicate strengths and weaknesses of the selected candidates and should submit written assessments of the candidates along with the results of reference checks when a hiring recommendation is made. A recommendation should be given to the appropriate Vice President and Human Resource Director. The Vice President will make the final decision regarding the appointment. Upon approval of the candidate by the Vice President, the Human Resource Director/designee will extend the offer.

3. After the employment offer has been accepted, the Human Resources Office will be responsible for notifying all other applicants.

4. All search committee materials, i.e. ratings, any other notes, and all applicant files will be returned immediately to the Director of Human Resources after the employment offer has been accepted.

5. The Human Resources Office will maintain records/documents of the search process for a minimum of three years.

Date	**Vice President** **Date**
Date	**President** **Date**

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> *Application Screening Form/Faculty*

Applicant _____ Position _____

The purpose of this form is to serve as a guide to enable you to objectively evaluate this candidate's suitability for an interview. Please circle the rating that best describes your impression of the applicant.

1=No evidence   *4=Strong evidence skill **is** present*
*2=Strong evidence skill is **not** present*   *5=Very strong evidence skill **is** present*
*3=Some evidence skill **is** present*

1. Education/Training	1	2	3	4	5
2. Three or more years teaching experience	1	2	3	4	5
3. Experience working with online course management system.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Curriculum Development	1	2	3	4	5
5. Evidence of understanding mission and vision of two year college.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Evidence of multilingual or multicultural background or experience working with underserved populations.	1	2	3	4	5
7. General Impression of Applicant	1	2	3	4	5
8._____	1	2	3	4	5

Total Points _____ **Rank** _____

Interview Granted: **Yes**_____ **No**_____

_____   _____
Rater   *Date*

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Application Screening Form

Applicant _____ Position _____

The purpose of this form is to serve as a guide to enable you to objectively evaluate this candidate's suitability for an interview. Please circle the rating that best describes your impression of the applicant.

1=Very strong evidence skill is not present   *4=Strong evidence skill is present*
2=Strong evidence skill is not present   *5=Very strong evidence skill is present*
3=Some evidence skill is present

1.	Education/Training	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Experience	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Community and Professional Involvement	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Previous Work Background	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Supervisory/Administrative Experience	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Community and Professional Involvement	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Other	1	2	3	4	5

Total Points _____ **Rank** _____

Interview Granted: **Yes**_____ **No**_____

_____   _____
Rater   *Date*

Sample Interview Questions
The following sample questions will provide you guidance with interview preparation and provide a strong framework for keeping out of legal trouble.

Qualifications
How you are specifically qualified for this position?
In what area do you think you may be lacking for this position?
What do you consider to be your best skills? What skills do you think you need to improve on?
Which computer software applications are you proficient in?
What other relevant experience or education would you like me to be aware of?
This position requires the individual to be knowledgeable in (fill in the blank). What experience do you have in this area?
What qualifications do you bring to this position that other candidates may not?
What other skills would you bring to this position which we have not discussed?

Work History
Tell me about your last job. What did you like most about it? What did you like least?
Give some examples of specific accomplishments from your previous jobs.
What were the greatest challenges of your most recent position and what did you do to overcome them?
Name something you did at your current or a past job that you were particularly proud of.
Have you ever received a verbal or written warning, or been suspended or discharged? If so, what were the circumstances?
Tell me about a time when you accepted a job only to find out it wasn't what you expected. What did you do? How did you handle it?

Work Habits
Describe how your desk looks at the end of the day.
Give an example of your organizational skills.
Describe how you schedule your day.
How do you handle frequent interruptions?
Describe how you organize your approach to a given task that must meet a specific deadline.
How do you deal with stressful situations?
How well do you work with deadlines?
Do you prefer working in teams or alone?
In what kind of environment do you do your best work?
How do others view your work? What would they say about it?

Supervisory/Management Experience
Describe your past supervisory or management experience and how many people you supervised at each position.
How do you motivate your employees?
Tell me about a time when you had to motivate a problem employee.
To what degree have you been involved in the financial and budgeting processes, either in your current or in a previously held position?
How well do you stay within your departmental budget?

How would you describe your management style? Give examples.
Describe any ways you found to save your organization money.
What do you do to maintain or improve employee morale?
What was the most difficult decision you had to make as a supervisor?
What was the most difficult action you took as a supervisor?
Describe a situation where you had to address an employee concerning poor performance or inappropriate behavior. How did you handle it, and what was the outcome?
Describe any experience you have had in training others.
Describe the extent of your experience with organized labor relations in terms of union contracts, negotiations, grievances, and discipline.
When was the last time you praised one of your employees for a job well done?
When was the last time you recognized an accomplishment of one of your employees in front of others?

Other
What do you know about our organization?
What do you consider to be your greatest strengths
What are two things you would like to improve on?
What are you looking for in a job?
Tell me about your best boss and what it was that made him or her a good boss.
In what specific ways did your past employers benefit from hiring you?
How can you benefit our organization?
What is the most important thing you learned from your last boss?
What did you like best about your last boss? What did you like least?
What do you think you could do better than your last boss?
What was the best job you've ever had, and what made it the best?
Tell us about yourself.
Why should we hire you?
What are your career goals?
Why did you choose this career?
If you were qualified for any job in the world, what would you be doing?
Where do you see yourself in five years? In ten years?
Can you please explain this gap in your employment?
Have you ever been fired or forced to resign?
Why are you leaving your current job? (Alternately, Why did you leave your last job?)
Why do you want to work here?
What sets you apart from others who are applying for this position?
Tell me about a significant mistake you made in your job. How did you handle it and what did you learn from it?
What is the most rewarding experience you've had in your career so far?
In what kind of corporate culture do you thrive?
How do you handle failure?
If offered the position, when would you be available to start?
Using just three words, describe yourself.
What is your reason for applying for this position?
Are you willing to relocate?

Are you willing to travel?
Is there anything relative to the position we have not discussed which you feel is important for us to know in making our decision?
What aspect of this position do you feel you will find the most enjoyable, and why?
What aspect of this position do you think you will find the most difficult, and why?

Accountability
Tell me about a time when you made a mistake or bad decision at work and had to admit your mistake. What happened and how did you handle it?
Recall an instance where you delegated responsibility but the result was unsatisfactory; what did you do to correct the situation?
Have you ever had to take the blame for someone else's mistake? Describe how that made you feel.
Have you ever let someone else take the blame for something you did?
While working on a team project, have you ever taken on greater responsibility than that which you were originally given? Explain.

Accuracy
How closely do you pay attention to detail?
How would you rate the accuracy of your work compared to that of your coworkers?
What do you do if you notice an error in someone else's work?
How carefully do you check your work before the final product is considered finished?
Do you consider yourself to be a perfectionist?
In general, how many times do you proof and revise something before you are satisfied?

Active Listening
Tell me about a time when you eliminated distractions in order to focus on something you were listening to.
How do you let others know you are listening to them?
Give me an example of when you had to rely on oral information given to you to get the job done.
Give an example of a time when you misinterpreted information that was verbally given to you.
What is the most important thing you have learned about "listening" and how has it impacted your listening skills?

Adaptability
How involved have you been in proposing new methods or technologies?
How readily do you adapt your way of thinking or working in response to a change in workplace conditions?
How do you help others accept change in the workplace?
Describe a time when you were forced to make a change you disagreed with.
In general, how do you feel about change in the business environment? Describe a time when a change was made that turned out to be a negative instead of a positive.
How strongly do you tend to hold on to the old way of doing things?

Ambition
Do you have an action plan for your career path?
At what level in your career do you see yourself in five years? In ten years?
Give an example of how you have shown initiative in a project assignment.
Give an example of a time where you pushed your work limits or broadened your skills to advance your career.
Describe something you did that you consider to be particularly ambitious.

Analytical Skills
Give an example of a time when you took raw data and developed meaningful conclusions from it.
Do you check multiple sources of data to draw your conclusions or would you rely on a single source? What if you could only find one source? Would you trust it?
Do you customarily notice discrepancies in information? Please share an example.
Do you approach a complex task by breaking it down into smaller, more manageable pieces? Give an example.
Do you look for more than one cause to a problem? Explain or give an example.

Applied Learning
What was the most complex task you learned at your previous job?
Give an example of a time when you mastered a new process quicker than your peers.
Tell me about one technical skill that you had to learn at your previous job.
Tell me about the last formal training session you attended and how you applied it to your everyday tasks.
Give an example of a time you caught on to something quickly vs. one that required more effort.

Assertiveness
How strongly do you stand up for your decisions once they are made?
If one of your ideas was ridiculed but you had a strong feeling that it was a good idea, what would you do?
If a coworker kept bothering you and preventing you from getting your work done, what would you do?
Discuss a time when you had to confront someone at work. What was it about and how did you handle it? How did the other person handle it?
If you witnessed a violation of company policy such as an act of harassment, what action would you take, if any?

Autonomy
How much direction do you need or prefer to have before tackling a new assignment?
Do you do your best work when working alone or when collaborating with others?
When you take work home, what percentage of the time do you actually get to it?
How often do you check in with your supervisor with questions or problems you have?
Describe a job you had where you had little supervision. What did you like about that, and what didn't you like?
Would you prefer to have your supervisor be readily accessible or in another location?

Business Acumen

How well do you pay attention to the larger issues surrounding a business? Give an example.

Do you attempt to identify the real decision-makers in the organization and try to influence them? Give an example.

Describe the extent to which you take note of trends in the industry and develop ideas for responding to opportunities or problems.

Have you ever prepared a contingency plan? If not, did you ever find you needed a Plan B but didn't have one? Explain the circumstances.

How do you view the role of politics in an organization?

Change Management

What is the most effective technique you have used to help people understand why a change had to occur?

Give an example of a time when you encouraged people to think "outside the box."

Give an example of a time when you had to smooth the process for people that were going through long-term changes in their department or company.

Tell me about a method you developed to reward employees who made suggestions involving change.

Tell me about a time when a change was not communicated well.

Coaching and Development

Tell me about a technique you used to effectively communicate to a team member that they needed to improve a particular skill.

Give an example of a time when you were able to motivate an unmotivated person.

What methods do you use to ensure that your staff feels valued for their contributions?

Give an example of a time when your coaching methods did not succeed in helping another to improve. Why?

Tell me about a specific development plan you created for a particular person and the results.

Communication, Oral

Do you prefer to talk to someone in person, by phone, send a memo, or email?

Do you ever paraphrase what someone else has said to make sure you understand it?

What do you do when you and another person are just not communicating well? Do you keep trying to reach an understanding or try another avenue?

Give an example of a miscommunication that happened at work. What was the situation and what were the consequences?

How much importance do you place on keeping those involved in a project informed about developments and plans?

Communication, Written

How well do you write, edit, and proof written materials? Which element is your strongest?

How easily do words flow when you write?

Do you organize your thoughts before you sit down to write or do you write "off the top of your head" and organize it later?

Is your preferred method of communication written or oral?

Are you able to express what you want to say in writing or do you find it difficult to get your point across?
Describe how you tailor your writing to the audience you're writing for.

Conflict Resolution
Give an example of a time you were working on a project with another person and a conflict arose. How did you resolve the situation?
Give an example of a time you were able to remain productive despite a conflict that arose.
Tell me about a time when a conflict arose and you were able to look at everyone's point of view and still come up with a rational solution.
Tell me about a personal conflict that arose between you and a coworker and how it was resolved.
Give an example of a time that a conflict arose and you were unable to reach a resolution.

Competitiveness
Do you consider yourself to be in competition with your coworkers?
Would you describe yourself as competitive by nature?
What is your definition of a winner?
What kinds of board games do you like to play?
If you can't win a game, is it still worth playing? Why?
Do you prefer to play a game individually or as a team member?
Are you a gracious loser?
Have you ever cheated to win?
Do you enjoy a good challenge to test yourself or would you rather not be tested?
What percentage of the time are you a gracious loser?

Conceptual Thinking
How well do you recognize common factors in situations that appear to be unrelated?
How quickly can you identify the central issue in a complex set of data?
How well can you take a complex issue and make it easy for others to understand?
Describe a time when you solved a problem that no one else seemed to be able to figure out. What was different about your approach?
Discuss a time when you were able to apply a principle you had learned previously to a new situation, and use it to solve that situation.
Describe a time when you solved a particularly difficult problem or resolved a particularly difficult situation. What did you do that made the result successful?

Consensus Building
How well do you accept and integrate others' suggestions and proposals?
How well do you work with others in order to agree on a common goal?
What methods do you engage to help build consensus among a group?
If there was not much time and opinions differed widely, how would you approach such a group to build consensus?
Do you build a better working relationship with people one-on-one or in a group situation?
What do you do when others react negatively to suggestions brought up in a group setting?

Creative
Tell me about a time you took a particularly creative approach to solve a problem.
Of any of your creative accomplishments, either at work or at home, what gave you the most satisfaction, and why?
Do you anticipate problems with a course of action and think of contingency plans to address those problems should they occur? Give an example.
What was the most creative solution to a problem you have seen someone else come up with or heard of?
Give an example of a time you took a bunch of lemons and made lemonade.

Customer Oriented
To what extent do you agree with the saying, "The customer is always right?"
How well do you try to understand the viewpoint and objectives of a client?
Do you work quickly to solve a customer's problem to their satisfaction? What is the longest time it ever took you to solve a customer's problem?
Describe a time when you had to go over and above what was usual to solve a customer's problem.
Did you ever encounter a customer who would not be satisfied no matter what you tried? What was the eventual outcome?
Do you talk to customers to find out how satisfied they are? What kinds of comments do you receive?
If a customer has a complaint, do you resolve the single complaint or, if appropriate, work to resolve the underlying problem? Please give an example.
What do you do to build and maintain long-term relationships with a client?

Decision Making
Describe the decision making responsibility you have in your current or most recent position.
Give an example of a bad decision you made and what the consequences were.
Do you tend to make quick decisions or do you prefer to take your time?
What was the most difficult decision at work that you ever had to make?
How willing are you to make tough decision and stand by them? Give an example.
Give an example of a time you had to make a quick decision. Was it the right one?
Describe the process you use to formulate the decisions you make.

Deductive Reasoning
Give an example of a time when you had to weigh different options in order to implement a directive from management.
Tell me about a time that your initial solution to a problem changed after you had considered all the facts.
Give an example of a time you took raw data and developed a meaningful conclusion from it.
Describe a time when you considered all the facts of a situation and decided not to take action, even though you were under pressure to do so.
Tell me about a time when you reached the wrong conclusion because you acted too quickly.

Delegating Responsibility
Tell about a time when you did not provide sufficient directive for an assignment you delegated to an employee.
Give an example of how you stay informed on projects you delegate.
Tell about a time when you decided to take on a difficult task yourself rather than delegate it to a direct report. Why?
Give an example of how you instill confidence in a delegated individual.
What was the most difficult assignment you delegated to a direct report?

Detail Oriented
Give examples of projects you dealt with that required you to pay close attention to detail.
Do you like detail work or would you rather look at the "big picture"?
How do you cope if you have to spend a great deal of time poring over minute details?
Give examples of the types of detailed information you work with in your current job.
Give an example of a time when something you were responsible for "fell through the cracks." What was it, and what were the consequences? Why did it happen?

**Diversity Oriented **
Please describe your understanding of diversity and your experience working with diverse populations.
Many of our colleagues are multi-generational, and racially and ethnically diverse. How would you address these complexities in your day to day work?
In what ways has your commitment to diversity been demonstrated in your work experience?
How have you supported strengthening diversity in your prior roles, and how would you proceed in our organization? Please provide examples that would speak to your commitment to fostering gender, racial, or ethnic equity and diversity.
Please address your professional and personal experiences working with diverse populations or cultures.
In what ways has your commitment to diversity been demonstrated in your work experience.

Enthusiastic
How eagerly do you tackle a new task or assignment?
If you are offered a special assignment which is optional, do you jump at the chance or think about it first?
On a scale from 1 to 10, how much do you look forward to going to work every day?
Do you join in office or company activities? Do you see them as an extension of the work experience? What impact do you think they have on building teamwork in the organization?
If something negative happens at work, does it damper your enthusiasm for the job as a whole?
How quickly does it take for you to regain your enthusiasm after a setback at work?

Empathetic
How well are you able to put yourself in someone else's shoes and imagine how he or she feels?
Are you able to put yourself in someone else's shoes and imagine how he or she feels?
Have you ever based a decision or changed a decision based on how it would make another person or group feel?
Emotional intelligence is becoming increasingly prominent as an evaluation factor in business. What role do you think emotions should play in business?

In general, do you consider yourself to be a sensitive person?
Did you ever work with an individual who was difficult to comprehend in the sense that you couldn't understand where he or she was coming from or what they were trying to say? What did you do to try harder to understand that person?
Describe a time when you were insensitive to someone. What attempts, if any, did you make to mend that bridge?
How well can you look at a problem from another person's point of view?

Energetic
Describe your ability to work at a fast pace and maintain that fast pace.
When you get to work in the morning, do you slowly work your way into the tasks of the day or do you dig right in?
Describe a job or task that required you to expend a high level of energy. Did you like performing that work?
Do you enjoy working at a fast pace or do you prefer things to be more evenly paced?
Describe what your coping mechanism is when things get hectic.
Some people do their best work under pressure. Do you find that to be the case with you? Why or why not?

Ethical
Describe a time when you were faced with a moral or ethical dilemma and how you handled it.
What types of confidential matters or information have you worked with and what steps did you take to keep the information confidential?
Describe a situation where you were asked to disclose confidential information and how you handled it.
If you found out about a work practice that was unfair, or discovered that a policy was being implemented inconsistently, what would you do?
Describe what ethics means to you.
Were you ever aware of someone else at work doing something unethical? What, if anything, did you do about it?
What would you do if you discovered your company was engaged in questionable business practices or doing something illegal?

Financial Aptitude
How do you ensure that you remain current in your field of expertise?
Describe the normal process you follow to prepare an annual budget.
Explain what the term "compounding interest" means.
How would you rate the accuracy of your work in preparing required financial reports?
Give an example of a time you improved financial processes in the company.

Friendly
How important do you think it is to act pleasant and cheerful toward others?
Do you think friendliness is an important component of business dealings or do you think business dealings can be done effectively by people who aren't necessarily friendly toward each other?

Do you find yourself being friendlier to people who can help you get ahead than to other people who have no such ability?
Would other people describe you as friendly? Based on what?
Have you ever snapped at a coworker or business associate and had to apologize later? Explain the circumstances and what happened.
Have you ever been called upon to be pleasant toward someone who wasn't very pleasant toward you? How did you manage it?

Goal Oriented
How much are you focused on the end result of a project?
Can you stay focused on a goal without getting caught up in obstacles that frustrate your attempts to reach that goal? Can you give an example?
How do you go about establishing goals for meetings or projects and clearly expressing those goals to others?
Describe a time when you set a goal but failed to reach it. What did you learn?
Are you in the habit of setting personal goals for yourself?

Honesty / Integrity
What role do you think honesty should play in business dealings?
Do you think that honesty is always the best policy in business?
Have you ever said you were done with a project or assignment when you weren't?
Give me an example of a situation that required you to compromise one of your principles. What principle did you compromise? Was it the right decision?
If you caught another employee doing something dishonest, what would you do about it?
Have you ever promised something you weren't sure you could deliver? What happened?
Have you ever stretched the truth to get a business deal? Did it work? Were there consequences?
Have you ever given the impression you were further along on a project than you actually were? Were there any repercussions?

Initiative
How confident are you in making decisions on the basis of your own initiative?
Give an example of a way in which you showed initiative on a project.
How well do you identify what needs to be done and do it without being asked?
Give an example of a time you went over and above the call of duty to complete an assignment.
How willing are you to suggest changes to make a process or product better?
Do you prefer to wait until an assignment is given to you or do you go looking for work?
Describe a way in which you improved something at work, either a product or a process.

Innovative
Give an example of a time you thought "outside the box."
Give an example of an idea you came up with entirely on your own. Was it implemented?
Give an example of something you developed, either a process or product, that was new.
Did you ever introduce a method or idea to your current organization that you had used in a previous job? How did it work?
Did you ever borrow an idea from another part of the organization and adapt it for use in your own job? What was it? Was it successful?

Interpersonal
Give an example of a time you used diplomacy to resolve a situation. Describe the circumstances and the outcome.
Can you anticipate how others will react to a situation and prepare for it? Give an example.
How well do you listen to others' ideas and concerns?
Are you able to approach others regarding sensitive situations? Can you give an example of a time you had to do this?
What do you do to make others feel comfortable?
Tell me about a time when you resolved a disagreement with a boss or coworker.
How do you deal with coworkers who disagree with you?
Describe a situation where you had to deal with an irate customer or employee, how you handled it, and what the outcome was.
Give an example of a time you disagreed with your supervisor's decision. What did you do?
Would you rather do business with someone who was all business and no chit-chat, or with someone who would take the time to get to know you as a person?
What methods do you use to "break the ice" when meeting someone new?
Have you ever been put in the position where you had to support a policy or outcome with which you did not agree? What did you do?
Have you ever had difficulty working with someone because of hard feelings or a personality clash? What steps did you take to get along?

Judgment
Would you be willing to change your position on something you believe in strongly if you were confronted with evidence that is contrary to your belief? How difficult would that be for you?
What is the worst business decision you ever made? What were the consequences and what did you learn from it?
Tell me about a time when you addressed a controversial topic. What was the topic and what did you do?
Give an example of a time you used poor judgment. What were the repercussions?
Describe your decision-making process and why you feel it's effective in making the right decisions.
What would you do if you knew you were right about something but the politically correct thing to do was to not press the issue?

Leadership
Tell me about a specific time you used leadership skills to accomplish a goal.
Give some examples of how you have demonstrated leadership skills.
How comfortable are you taking a leading role and having others look to you for direction?
Tell me about a time when you assumed a leadership role in a work situation without formally being assigned that role.
What methods do you use to get people to accept you as their leader?
Have you ever been in a leadership position and not known what to do, or not understand the next step? What did you do?
How would you describe your leadership style? Give examples.

Loyal

When you are engaged in your work, how devoted are you to your job?
Have you ever been approached by a competitor for information or to work for them? What did you do?
Have you ever been in a position to divulge private company information? What happened?
Have you ever had the opportunity to steal customers from a former employer? Did you?
How willing are you to stand by a company whose policies you don't agree with?

Management Skills

How effective do you think you are in supervising others?
Do you try to be a friend to your employees or do you distance yourself from them because you are their supervisor?
Do you prefer to delegate responsibilities or handle things yourself?
How closely do you supervise your employees?
How would you describe your management style? Please give examples.
How often do you praise an employee for a job well done?
When evaluating the performance of your employees, what do you consider to be the most important factors?
In what ways do you set an example for your employees?
How open are you to suggestions from your employees?
What do you think is the most difficult part about supervising people?

Motivation

When is the last time you recognized or rewarded an employee for a job well done?
What motivates you in your work?
How do you motivate others to do their best work?
How often do you meet with your employees to energize the group and re-focus their attention?
How well do you think you inspire others to do their best work?
How do you work in an environment where morale is generally low?
What do you do to improve morale in your department?

Negotiation Skills

Tell me about a time when you worked with others to achieve a win-win situation.
Tell me about the last negotiation you were involved in and the role you played.
Give an example of how you managed to keep the group focused on the task at hand when participants began to get off track.
Give an example of a negotiation you were involved in that you would have handled differently.

What was the most complicated dispute you settled successfully.

Organized
Do you consider your working style to be orderly?
Describe what your desk looks like.
How long does it take you to locate a specific piece of paper from a file?
In general, how long does it take you to get to your mail or your inbox?
Did anyone ever ask you for something that you knew was on your desk or in your office but you couldn't locate it?
On a scale from 1 to 10, how organized do you consider yourself to be at work?

Persistence
How easily do you give up if something doesn't work right the first time?
Tell me about a time when you persisted to get your idea implemented.
Discuss a time when you had to overcome a difficult obstacle. How did you do it?
Describe a project or endeavor you initially failed at but at which you later succeeded. What made the difference?
Give an example of how your persistence has helped you reach your career goals.

Patience
How well do you handle delays in a work project?
Describe a situation that required you to demonstrate a great deal of patience.
How easily do you get frustrated trying to explain something to someone who just doesn't get it?

Do you consider yourself to be a patient person?
Is there ever a time when you think it is more appropriate not to be patient?
Describe a time when you were patient but it didn't help the situation.

Persuasive
How do you get others to come around to your way of thinking?
Do you prefer a soft-sell or hard-sell approach?
How do you go about persuading someone to do something he or she originally didn't want to do?
How well do you present your point of view?
Explain how you take others' considerations into account to look for win-win solutions.
Do you try to take others' considerations into account to look for win-win solutions?
Discuss a situation where you offered trade-offs or concessions to gain commitment from others.

How do you identify the real decision-makers and try to influence them?

Project Management
Give an example of a project or task you were responsible for from inception to completion, how you accomplished it, and what the outcome was.
Give an example of a delay that threatened to derail a project deadline and what you did to overcome it.
How well do you direct people and control deadlines to meet a specific goal? Give an example.
Do you question others to assess if they are "stuck" or if things are running along smoothly with their phase of the project? How do you help if they are stuck?

How often do you check on the status of a project in its various phases?

Presentation Skills
What experience do you have speaking in front of people?
On a scale from 1 to 10, how comfortable are you speaking in front of a large group?
Have you ever conducted training sessions? For what size groups?
What is your process in preparing a presentation for a group?
What do you do when a discussion gets off track or you are "losing" your audience?

Problem Solving
Give an example of a time you thought through a complex problem and developed a solution.
How well do you probe for further information when others are unwilling to provide all the information they could? Can you give an example?
Describe the process you go through to solve a complex problem.
What do you do when you just don't understand something that you are required to learn for work?
How do you go about setting priorities when everything must be done at once?
Describe a problem you just couldn't solve on your own and where you went for help. Were you then able to solve it?
How did you handle it when you were supposed to perform a task but lacked all the information necessary to complete it?
What is the most difficult problem you have had to solve?
What problem did you find a solution to that you are most proud of?

Relationship Building
How do you find a way to work effectively with different types of people?
How do you go about building rapport and trust with people?
Do you seek out and build relationships with others who can provide assistance, information, potential business, or other benefits? Give an example.
What do you do to identify some element of common ground with someone you don't know?
How do you express appreciation and gratitude toward others who have lent their support or provided assistance in some way?
What do you think is more important: Getting to know your coworkers or keeping your nose to the grindstone?
What kind of people are the most difficult to work with?
Describe a situation where you had to work with a difficult individual. What did you do to make things go more smoothly?

Resilient
What do you do to bounce back after a setback at work? How long does it take you?
Think back to a particular setback and tell me what you learned from it.
How do you react when your work is criticized? What do you do differently when your work is criticized?
Have you ever been through a company reorganization? How did the change affect you? How quickly were you able to operate under the new system? Did you welcome the change?

Have you ever had a change in supervisor? How did you respond to having a new boss? How did the change affect your work?

Responsible
Give an example of a time you showed responsibility above and beyond what was expected of you.
Give an example of a time when you failed to be responsible for something at work that was your responsibility; what was it and what were the consequences?
Discuss a time when you took over responsibility for a project from someone else.
Give an example of an instance where your boss gave you greater responsibility in your job than you previously had (not as part of a promotion).
Discuss how your career path has increased your responsibilities over time, and give specific examples.
When you are wrong about something, what do you do?
Who do you consider is responsible for mistakes made by one of your team members or staff?

Resource Management (People & Equipment)
Tell about a time you had to choose between two conflicting priorities to work on first.
How did you determine the target completion date for a project you recently headed.
Give an example of a time when you did not meet a deadline and how you handled it.
Tell me about a time when you reorganized something to be more efficient.
How did you allocate financial resources to accomplish a long-range goal?

Reliability
Would others describe you as reliable? Why would they say that?
Give an example of a time someone called on you to do something that was over and above what was generally expected of you, and you came through.
Describe a number of ways you have shown your reliability to your employer.
Describe something your employer has entrusted you with, whether it's confidential information or a special project.
When given assignments, what is the percentage of time you get them done right? If something was not done correctly, what was the reason?

Research Skills
Give an example of the most recent investigation you successfully completed for a project.
Give some examples of innovative resources you have used recently to assist in information-gathering.
Have you ever run into a roadblock when seeking information/data? What did you do?
Outline the typical steps you take to plan an effective search strategy.
Describe the steps you take to maintain confidentiality while collecting data and during the entire research process.

Risk Taker
Tell me about a time when you took a risk to solve a problem.
Describe a time when you took a risk at work and it didn't work out. What were the consequences?

How easily do you stretch your comfort zone to solve a problem?
What is the biggest risk you ever took at work? How did it turn out?
Can you recall a time when you should have taken a risk and regret not doing so? Describe the nature of the risk and the outcome.

Safety Awareness
Tell about a piece of equipment you operated in which you had to follow certain safety standards.
Tell about a procedure you designed to make your job safer.
Give an example of a time you noticed someone performing a task unsafely. What did you do?
Give an example of a time that you bent a safety rule in order to finish a job on time.
What would you do if you were shorthanded at work and you had to ensure that safety was not disregarded?

Sales Ability
Tell me about the most effective sales approach you have used in the last 6 months.
What was the most difficult sales situation you have ever been in?
What was one thing you did differently to land a huge sale?
What is an effective approach you use to get your "foot in the door?"
Describe your most satisfying sales experience and tell why it was so rewarding.

Self Confident
How confident are you in your problem solving abilities?
How much faith do you have in yourself to make informed but risky decisions?
How comfortable are you in making decisions and feeling they are the right ones?
Are you willing to speak up if you think something is not going in the direction it should or if you disagree with a decision?
Do you approach challenges and tasks with the belief that you can overcome any obstacles that should arise?
What kinds of things are you most confident doing?
Have you ever been faced with an insurmountable obstacle in your work? What did you do?

Self Motivated
How successful are you at providing your own incentives to get your work done?
Can you give an example that demonstrates you are a self-starter?
When you start your work day, do you tend to ease into it or dig right in?
Give an example of a time when you did your job well despite not liking the place you were working or the supervisor for whom you worked.
Do you work better when you have actual incentives to work toward (such as formal recognition or monetary rewards)?

Strategic Planning
Tell me about a time when you planned group priorities to reflect the organization's vision and values.
Give an example of a time when you were unable to motivate others to support a new vision.

What types of organizational systems (controls, compensation, communication, etc.) have you developed to support a specific corporate strategy?

How have you made your company's vision and values meaningful to others?

Give an example of a strategy you developed that did not work. Why?

Systems Analysis

Tell me about a time that you recognized an important gap in the current system and how you dealt with it.

Describe the process you use to figure out a systems problem – starting at the beginning.

Describe a time when you were able to engineer a clear draft out of chaos.

Tell about a time you were required to assess the usefulness of pre-developed application packages and adapt them to a user environment.

Describe a time you had to expand or modify the system to serve new purposes or improve work flow.

Tactful

Give an example of a time you had to be diplomatic in dealing with others.

Tell me about a time when you addressed a controversial topic. What was the topic and how did you address it?

Have you ever been called upon to negotiate something or mediate between two parties? What strategies did you use?

Have you ever had to approach someone about an issue you knew would not be received well? How did you handle it? How did the other person handle it?

Have you ever had to point out something embarrassing to another person? How did you do it?

Team Builder

Describe how you get your employees to work together as a team.

How do you resolve conflict between team members?

How much autonomy do you give to your team members?

How do you encourage groups to resolve problems on their own?

What do you do if certain team members are not doing their fair share?

Do you seek opportunities to work on teams?

Do you prefer working in a team environment or on your own?

Have you ever engaged any team-building exercise? What did you think of it?

What do you do when team members can't seem to work together and it is jeopardizing the project?

Technical Aptitude

How well do you understand the technical aspects of your job?

How do you stay informed about technical developments in your field?

Do you like to be on the cutting edge technologically?

Do you welcome new opportunities to learn new technology?

How easily do you incorporate new technology into your existing processes or methods?

In what area of technical expertise do you consider yourself to be the most proficient?

Tenacious
How do you approach the completion of a task in the face of obstacles?
Do you find it difficult to concentrate on a task you find boring or tedious?
Give an example of a time you stuck with a task that turned out to be more difficult or time-consuming than you anticipated.
How vigorously do you hold to your position when you honestly believe you're right?
Describe a situation where you held firm to your opinion or course of action, only to find later that you were in the wrong. How did you handle that?

Time Management
How efficiently do you use your work time?
How productive would you say you are compared to your coworkers?
When faced with multiple tasks and limited time, how do you prioritize?
Give an example of a time you worked smarter rather than longer.
How do you organize your work day?
At what time of day are you most productive at work: during the middle of the day, or at the beginning or end of the day?
How do you handle interruptions?
How long does it take you to get back on track after an interruption?
How do you pace your work when faced with a deadline far into the future?
Have you ever procrastinated starting a project and then had to "cram" to get it done on time? How did it turn out?

Tolerance
How well can you work with others in the organization without being judgmental?
Do you feel everyone has a right to their own opinion even if they are different from yours?
How tolerant are you when changes are implemented that affect how you do your work?
How do you deal with others who have a different way of thinking than you? Do you try to sway them to your point of view or do you agree to disagree?
How well do you tolerate people who are different from you?

Training
Tell me about a successful training experience you performed in the last 6 months.
Tell me about a training experience that was not successful and how you would change it.
What method did you use to encourage others to participate in a group discussion?
How did you manage to instill a positive attitude towards learning in one of your training sessions?
How did you manage to successfully train others who were at varying degrees of understanding the subject matter?

Working Under Pressure
What methods do you use to help you deal with stress?
What is your coping mechanism when things suddenly get hectic at work?
Have you ever had a situation at work where everything went wrong? How did you maintain your composure and get things back on track?
What was the most stressful job or assignment you ever had?

How do you deal with deadline situations?

How well do you work under pressure? Does it invigorate you or slow you down?

How do you react when your work is criticized? What do you do differently when your work is criticized?

Give an example of a work crisis or emergency you were involved with. What was your role and what did you do?

What elements caused stress for you in your last job?

Do's and Don'ts of Note Taking

It is perfectly all right to take notes during an interview to remember a candidate's responses to your questions, and in fact, it's a good idea. But there are some legal and etiquette-related concerns in taking notes.

Note taking etiquette

First, while taking notes is an integral part of the interview process, don't overdo it. There is nothing worse than an uncomfortable silence as all conversation stops so the interviewer can scribble notes. Take down brief notes as the candidate is responding to your questions. If you write reminders to jog your memory, you can flesh out your notes after the interview is completed and the candidate has departed.

Think of note taking as an art form. While you're taking notes, try to maintain eye contact as much as possible, and nod or somehow affirm that you are still listening to the candidate while you write. Try to keep the flow of conversation going as much as possible. Try to give the candidate as much of your full attention as possible; note taking should be secondary to engaging in a meaningful exchange of information with the candidate.

Legal aspects of note taking

Discrimination

In a nutshell, don't write down anything that could be construed as discriminatory! Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination in employment decisions on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion and gender. Making any notations that refer to any of these "protected classes" may very well get you into legal trouble.

While it may help you to remember a candidate by making a notation about their personal characteristics, this is not a good idea. For instance, if you write in your notes "tall black man," or "Asian female," that may be viewed as discriminatory, especially if the individual doesn't get the job. Your intent in writing it may have been completely innocent, but you don't want to have to defend the notes you took, and describe what your thought process was, months or even years after the fact.

If you feel it necessary to write some kind of description to jog your memory to keep each candidate straight in your mind, choose an article of clothing, like "blue shirt" or "snakeskin shoes" — something neutral that can't be used as a basis for discrimination.

Consistency

Another legal aspect of note taking is to be consistent. Don't take notes for one individual and not take any, or take only sparse notes, for another. It may show a bias for a particular individual or against another. You want the process to look as fair and objective as possible, should it ever be called into question.

For instance, say a minority individual sues for failure to hire based on discrimination. If there were very few notes taken for that individual's interview but copious notes taken for the other candidates' interviews (especially if they were non-minority candidates), it may look as if your interest in the minority candidate was not genuine, and smack of discrimination. Objective evidence like that is hard to defend.

Direct quotes

In taking notes, it is best not only to refrain from making prejudicial or judgmental comments, but if appropriate, try to record word for word any statement the candidate made that stood out in your mind, and put quotes around it so that anyone reading the notes later will know it is a direct quote. This may be especially helpful for a negative statement made by the candidate that may impact the decision to hire (or not to hire). Just be sure you've recorded the statement accurately. This lends more credence to the employer in the inevitable game of "he said, she said" if a lawsuit is ever brought and the interview process is called into question.

Volunteered information

Do not take notes concerning information the candidate volunteers if it is information it would have been illegal for you to ask. For example, when you ask a candidate to describe herself and she responds that she is a married mother of three, don't write that down. It is not information that is related to the job and should not be considered, or even look like it was considered, in the hiring decision.

Note retention

Interview notes are part of the hiring record. The retention requirement is for all applicants, not just the successful candidates who were hired. You never know when you may be called upon to defend your hiring decision, so it is best to have those records available.

Pitfalls to Avoid in the Interview Process

Interviewing candidates for a position is difficult enough without worrying about possible pitfalls. The goal is to keep the interview process as fair and objective as possible so that all candidates are given the same chance to express their qualifications for a position, and to give the interviewer(s) a consistent basis for evaluating all candidates. Even seasoned interviewers may be guilty of bias at some time or another in their interviewing techniques without even realizing it. There are certain things you can watch out for as you interview, and if you're aware of them and make an effort to avoid them, your interview process will be more fair and objective and you will be closer to getting the result you want.

Potential pitfalls

Asking inconsistent questions

It is imperative, to maintain the objectivity of the process, to ask the same questions of all candidates. How can you compare one with another if they answered different questions? This doesn't mean you can't ask open questions such as, "Tell me about yourself," so long as you ask that of all candidates. But it wouldn't be fair to elicit information from one candidate without allowing another candidate to provide the same information.

Error of first impression

We have a tendency to want to "peg" people, to classify them or put them into neat categories. We all know people are more complex than this; however, it is human nature to do so. It is easy, then, to want to make snap judgments about people whom you've just met. It is likely that a person will make either a good or bad first impression within the first five minutes. This impression will stay with the you, but don't let it cloud your judgment. Try to get past the first impression and look at the candidate's answers as objectively as possible.

Stereotyping

A stereotype is a belief that represents an oversimplified opinion or prejudiced attitude with regard to a certain group of people. For example, the belief that women can't perform in executive level positions is a stereotype about women. Stereotyping is easy to do but must be avoided. It must be remembered that every person is a unique individual and should be regarded that way in an interview process. Each candidate's talents and qualifications should be considered as objectively as possible without seeing that person as a member of a "group."

The halo effect

This is a situation where the interviewer allows one strong point to overshadow all other information received in the interview. For example, if it is discovered early in an interview that the candidate attended the interviewer's alma mater, having that in common may create a tendency for the interviewer to place less weight on any negative information that may come out later in the interview.

Conversely, and known as the "horn effect," a strong negative may have the same influence on the interviewer. For example, if the candidate being interviewed makes a seemingly innocent comment about something that nonetheless was bothersome to the interviewer, that remark may stay with the interviewer throughout the remainder of the process and negatively color any positive information that may be gained.

Politically correct answers

It is easy to get caught up in the excitement when you find a candidate who "talks a good game." Some people have well-developed communication skills, are comfortable talking to people or in front of groups, and can think fast on their feet, but what are they saying? Are they giving you the answers you want to hear? In other words, are they giving you "politically correct" responses? Are they informative responses? Are they answering the questions you are asking, or are they twisting them around to make their own point? Unless the position you're hiring for needs someone with those communication skills, it is best to analyze the candidate's responses for the quality of the information you're getting, not the quality of the presentation. Such individuals may not be appropriate for the position you are trying to fill, but they may seem so because of the way they present themselves.

Contrast

Strong candidates who interview after weak ones may appear even stronger, and weak candidates who interview after strong ones may appear even weaker. It is difficult to counteract this effect, and it is almost impossible not to compare candidates, especially when they are being interviewed one right after another. As long as you're aware of this, keep in mind that your job is to evaluate each candidate as objectively as possible with the information you obtain in each interview.

Mannerisms

If an individual being interviewed has a particularly irritating mannerism, it may have a tendency to overshadow the interviewer's objectivity for the rest of the interview. It is distracting to the interviewer, even irritating, and may make it difficult for the interviewer to focus on the task at hand. Unless it's something you can address to the candidate ("Excuse me, would you mind removing your gum? The gum snapping is distracting."), you will just have to grin and bear it and try to let it distract you as little as possible.

The 80/20 rule

One of the possible pitfalls, depending on the interviewer, is talking too much and not allowing the candidate sufficient time to answer the questions. The general rule is that the interviewer should talk 20% of the time, and the candidate should talk 80% of the time. If the interviewer does too much of the talking, two things can happen: the allotted time may run out before all the desired questions can be asked, and the interviewer will not get enough sense of the candidate's qualifications or suitability for the position to make an informed decision. Either does not give a

fair shake to the candidate. It is essential to stay on target with prepared questions and stay within the time frame for asking them.

Subjective vs. objective

In the real world, it is impossible to remain completely objective in an interviewing situation. In fact, there is a place for subjectivity in the process. How many times have you heard of someone being hired because of a "gut feeling" by the hiring manager? And you should listen to your "gut" if you feel someone will (or will not) be a good fit within the department and/or organization.

While subjective reasons may have their place, they should not be the overriding factor in a decision to hire. If called upon to defend your decision, it is always best to be able to point to objective criteria as the reason for hiring someone. If you keep in mind these possible pitfalls, you can make an effort to recognize and avoid those things which may prevent you from remaining as objective as possible in your interviewing process.

Interview Evaluation Form

Candidate
Name:_____Date:_____

Position:_____

Interviewer:_____

The purpose of this form is to serve as a guide to enable you to objectively evaluate this candidate's suitability for employment. Please circle the rating that best describes your impression of the applicant.

1 = Very strong evidence skill is not present   *4 = Strong evidence skill is present*
2 = Strong evidence skill is not present   *5 = Very strong evidence skill is present*
3 = Some evidence skill is present

1.	Communication Skills	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Initiative, Energy, Desire And Enthusiasm	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Education/Training	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Previous Work Experience	1	2	3	4	5
5.	General Impression of Applicant	1	2	3	4	5
6.	_____	1	2	3	4	5
7.	_____	1	2	3	4	5

Total Points:_____   **Rank:**_____

Major
Strengths:_____
_____
_____

Primary Areas of Concern:_____

_____

Additional Comments:_____

_____

_____

_ _____

_____

References

Reference checks should be conducted for those candidates who you are considering forwarding to the hiring designee as a finalist.

Through the NeoGov application system all applicants have digitally signed and consented to reference checks.

Consistency is frequently a concern in reference checking. The committee should decide whether reference checking will be centralized or decentralized. Centralizing the process through Human Resources or one or two individuals on the committee working as a team assists in meeting the concern of consistency.

The first questions asked during a reference check should be neutral in nature, simply verifying factual information, such as job title, dates of employment, basic job duties. Beginning this way helps to ease both parties into the conversation and tends to lessen any defensive feeling the reference giver might have. Some general comments regarding reference questions:

- Do not accept all the information at face value. Personality conflicts and different work cultures may inappropriately influence responses.
- Do not ask illegal questions. Questions, which cannot legally be asked during an interview, cannot be asked during a reference check.
- Do not ask general questions. Questions should be specific in nature and phrased so they cannot be misunderstood.
- Do not ask the reference giver for personal judgments or for conclusions about an area of the applicant's experience with which he or she is unfamiliar. Stick to the facts.

One key reason to conduct a reference check is to obtain additional information. Therefore, remember to listen actively. How someone responds to questions can say as much as what is said. An active listener can hear enthusiasm or hesitancy. How long someone takes to answer the question can be a message.

Tips for effective reference-checking interviews

- Explain to the reference your intent and approximately how long the questions will take.
- If the candidate has signed a release, you can inform the reference and possibly encourage more answers from the reference.
- Describe the position and the functions of the open job to the reference, then make sure the questions are all job related.
- Follow the questions you prepared to avoid getting sidetracked and to ensure consistency and reliability. Ask open-ended questions – rather than yes/no questions – to collect more information on the candidate.
- Use follow-up questions for clarity and thoroughness.
- In your interviews with reference contacts, strive to obtain *job-related* facts and relevant information based on past behavior and experiences, rather than opinions. Ask for examples of specific incidents.
- Stay on the alert for any signs of evasiveness, unusual pauses or even overly enthusiastic responses.
- The laws protecting candidates against discrimination also apply when conducting reference checks. Avoid questions concerning age, race, sex, religion or national origin. Typically these are not job-related questions.

Sample Search Committee Recommendation Letter

To: Dr. Jeff Williamson, College Provost

From: Susan Hopscotch, Committee Chair for Carpentry

Date: May, 15, 2011

Subject: Committee Recommendations – Carpentry

Committee Members:

The committee convened on May 5, 2011 to interview five candidates for the Carpentry faculty position at the Pipestone campus of Minnesota West. The five candidates interviewed were ………………..

The committee is recommending the following two candidates as finalists for the faculty position.

Candidate xxxxx holds a Bachelor's Degree in Industrial Trades from Minnesota State University, Mankato and has a combined total experience of over twenty years in the construction industry. The experience includes carpentry, architectural drafting and design, building materials specifications and estimating, building materials sales and management, project coordinator on residential and commercial projects. Additionally xxx has teaching experience in carpentry programs at the postsecondary level. Strengths the committee believes this candidate would bring to the college are:

References for xxxx share the following:

Candidate xxxx holds an AAS in Construction Trades from Minnesota West Community and Technical College and has a total combined experience of approximately six years in the construction industry as a carpenter and instructor. This experience includes project

coordination and work on residential and commercial projects. In addition xxx has instructional experience including supervising and training apprentices. XXX has also worked as a Carpenter/Foreman in all aspects of the construction industry. Strengths the committee believes this candidate would bring to the college are:

References for xxxx share the following:

CLOSING THE SEARCH

To close the search, all evaluation materials, including initial evaluations, rank orderings, interview evaluations, and reference notes, as well as any other information collected regarding the search must be returned to the Human Resources Office. All search related materials will be kept on file for a minimum of two years, pursuant to federal law.

> *All materials associated with a search process are subject to disclosure upon appropriate notification and/or subpoena should the college's process be challenged in the form of a discrimination complaint by an authorized agency of the courts.*

Instructions for Viewing and Screening Applications Using NeoGov Applicant Tracking System

Once you have been set up as a Subject Matter Expert (SME) you will receive an email from info@neogov.com identifying your user name for the system. Immediately you will receive a second email that gives you a link to set your password into the system.

When logging into the system be sure to click the radio button entitled "Online Hiring Center – Departments". Website address for future reference is http://neogov.com/

Once logged into the system you click on the link along the top of the page entitled "My SME Review". A list of job postings to which you have been assigned as a search committee member will appear. Click on the job posting under the Exam Plan column for the applicants you want to view.

To view the application submitted by an applicant, click on their name in the Candidate Column. Note: To view the resume and transcripts they have attached, scroll down to the Attachments section of the application, and click on the File Names. The attachments will open in the software in which it was stored (such as Word or Adobe).

Complete the screening forms that have been approved for your search as usual. Remember all notations must be job-related, and be objective recordings of information. **To protect candidate confidentiality, do not print applications off the online system.**

Maintain the security of the screening forms while they are in your possession.

Do not make entries in Show Candidate Disposition on the online system.

Be sure to click logout in the upper right hand corner when you walk away from your computer or stop your work in NeoGov for the day to protect candidate confidentiality. NeoGov will time out after 60 minutes of inactivity, requiring a login to resume.

If you have difficulty accessing the system or applicants, please contact Karen Miller or Denise Sik at the Canby Campus, 507-223-7252, IP 1255 or 1228 respectively.

8/10/12