

Elements of an Effective NewHire Pre-employment Application

The NewHire pre-employment application and the search functions associated with it are central to the NewHire process. By formulating effective application questions and then searching for specific responses, you can immediately eliminate unqualified applicants and focus on those with relevant skills and experience.

To formulate effective questions, keep both the job description and the ideal candidate in mind. **Ask questions that are directly relevant to the open position. Design the questionnaire so that you can search for candidates whose answers indicate they are qualified in key areas.** Search for the ideal answers to the questions you created.

Employee qualifications fall into three fundamental categories. You should address each in the NewHire questionnaire. These include:

1. Skills and experience
2. Education & aptitude (talent)
3. Work behaviors and attitudes

Design one or two questions to find out about skills and experience. Ask specifically how many years of relevant work experience a candidate has. For this type of question, use the radio button answer type and provide the candidates with a list of experience levels (or years) to choose from. Make sure that the experience level for the ideal candidate is one of the available choices. See the example below:

- **Question:** How many years of bookkeeping experience do you have?
- **Answer choices:** less than one year, 1 to 2 years, 3 to 5 years, 6 or more years
- **Reason:** To determine if the candidate meets the position's experience level requirement

Design questions that will reveal whether or not a candidate possesses specific skills or certifications that are necessary for the job. For these types of questions, provide the candidate a list of answers to choose from, or allow them to provide a short written answer. See the following examples:

- **Question:** With which of the following programs are you proficient?
- **Answer choices:** Peachtree, QuickBooks, SAP, Great Plains
- **Reason:** To determine if the candidate is proficient with the required software applications

- **Question:** Do you hold any of the following subject matter endorsements?
- **Answer choices:** Math, Special Education, Science, Social Science
- **Reason:** To determine teacher qualifications

Design questions that address work behaviors and attitudes. Ask a question or two about how a candidate would respond to or solve a typical workplace problem or situation. Select a memo answer type to allow candidates to write a brief answer.

- **Question:** A customer complains about shipment tardiness. What are the first 3 steps you should take to handle this?
- **Answer:** Provide a memo answer type that displays an open field in which the job seeker can type her answer.
- **Reasons:** To determine if the candidate handles situations in a manner that suits both your company and the position, to evaluate the candidate's communication skills and thought processes, and to obtain a writing sample

There is a wide range of other possible questions to ask; for example, you may want to include some knowledge-based questions.

- **Question:** What is the correct way to change the settings for an XYZ formatting machine?
- **Answer:** Provide 4 choices with one correct answer or a text box for a short written answer
- **Reason:** To determine if the candidate truly has the knowledge that will be necessary to complete assigned duties

Always keep the following suggestions in mind:

- Include more check boxes and radio button questions than memo style questions on your application. Radio button or check box questions take little time for the applicant to complete, and they allow you to use NewHire's sort and search function to quickly identify qualified candidates for further review.
- Too many essay style (memo answer) questions can be prohibitive and intimidating to applicants, and are burdensome for the hiring manager to read. However, an excellent answer to this type of question will distinguish a candidate from the crowd. Include no more than 2 or 3 memo type questions in your application.
- Although a NewHire application questionnaire allows you to ask 12 questions, do not feel you have to use all of them. Ask the fewest number of questions necessary to narrow your applicant pool. Candidates will respond more carefully to a concise but focused application.

A good NewHire pre-employment questionnaire puts you in the driver's seat. The questionnaire gives you the ability to immediately isolate those applicants who have the potential to be successful in your available position. A candidate's response to your application questions plus the information on her resume provides you with an accurate profile of her qualifications.