Interview Questions

By L. Douglas Mault

Caveat: As of the time of writing this article I believe all the following questions are legal and can be asked of an interviewee. However, laws and regulations differ from state to state, and there may be differences between state and federal laws and regulations. Finally, laws and regulations change frequently and quickly. Therefore, I urge you to review these questions with your company’s attorney to be sure they meet all legal and regulatory requirements.

Interviewing prospective employees is a challenging—and often difficult—process. What questions should I ask, and what will the answers tell me? The questions listed under each topic are designed to elicit the prospective employee’s attitude toward that topic, to determine if the interviewee has even thought through the process of interviewing with your company, and to learn if he will fit with your company and with other employees.

When you prepare for the interview, you should have an idea of what the “right” answers are to each. By “right,” I mean those answers that indicate the interviewee may be a good fit. Of course, these questions and the “right” answers to them are no guarantee of hiring the “right” person.

Knowledge of Organization
- Why do you think you would like to work for our company?
- What interests you about our product or service?
- Tell me what you know about our company.
- How do you compare our company with others in the field?
- How do you think you would fit in our company?
- What do you see as our company’s biggest challenge?

Work Experience
- Which of your qualifications make you feel you will be successful in this job? Why?
- What previous jobs have you held?
- How were you treated by previous employers?
- Why are you leaving your present employment?
- What have you learned from previous jobs and bosses?
- What jobs did you enjoy most? Least? Why?
- What would make you want to leave our company?
- Why should we hire you?
- Describe your “ideal” work situation.
- What are your special abilities?
- How would your coworkers describe you? How would your bosses describe you?
- What motivates you?

Job Performance
- What determines a person’s progress in a good company?
- What criteria would you use to evaluate subordinates?
- Describe a good attendance record.
- Were you fairly evaluated by your last/current employer? Why?

Pay and Benefits
- What are your salary/commission/hourly expectations to start with us?
- What are your compensation expectations for two years from now?
- How do you feel about bonuses as part of your income?

Personality and General
- What activities do you enjoy most?
- What kind of boss do you prefer? Why?
- What are your major strengths? Weaknesses?
- With what types of people do you find it difficult to deal?

About the Author
L. Douglas Mault is president of the Executive Advisory Institute, Yakima, Wash.