

What You Can and Can't Ask in Interviews

A few short years ago, you could say almost anything or ask nearly any question in a job interview. But no more. Equal employment legislation makes it impossible to be indifferent about what you ask or don't ask in a job interview; whether or not you intend to discriminate, you may be violating the law.

Perhaps it's time to evaluate your interviewing procedure. Are some of your usual questions pointless? If so, discard them. And here are some other tips:

1. Ask only job-related questions.
2. Standardize interview questions so that they can be asked of all job candidates. Ask the same questions of men and women, or minority and non-minority applicants.
3. Standardize the forms on which you record information about the interview. This helps you keep unbiased data.
4. Inquire into a person's marital status and number of dependents only after he or she is hired (and only for employee benefits and tax-withholding purposes).
5. Avoid subtle discrimination. Avoid indirect statements that may show a preference for a particular group.
6. If you're unable to do the actual interviewing, carefully select an unbiased interviewer who abides by your rules.
7. If an applicant offers personal information of a "protected nature" do not probe on the personal information.
8. Before asking an applicant a question, ask yourself: "What does this question have to do with the job? What response can be solicited from the applicant?"

Source: Luther College workshop training manual provided by:

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