

INTERVIEW & ASSESSMENT



EXPERTS: Pam Brady - HR Manager, Portland Bottling Company

Beth Olenski - HR, Dave's Killer Bread

Gina Shilhaneck - HR, Oregon Food Bank

Patrice Stankavich - HR, Harry's Fine Foods

Corbett Gordon - Employment Attorney

PAM BRADY:

My job in HR working with second chance individuals really isn't that much different, because I don't look at someone that comes in to apply for a job as someone who has a record. I look at them as a human being, as the individual that they are, and focus on, again, their experience and what can they do to help as well as what can we do to help them.

GINA SHILHANEK:

When candidates come in, we just ask interview questions that evoke the story and emotion. Maybe something personal even that allows us to say "hey that person is mission driven" or I can see them as a part of Oregon Food Bank and feeding people and doing the good work that we are doing together.

PATRICE STANKAVICH:

I just don't differentiate, I find no purpose in differentiating between Second Chance candidates and non, because I am not that curious about the past. Again, somebody needs to have some of the basic components to get their foot in the door, certainly. But after that, it's so much more about what you can do for me now and frankly I am so certain that I have hired people in the past that have done maybe not the best or smartest things, but we don't know about it, because they never got caught. I've also hired people that we thought were fantastic and great citizens who in the future did pretty terrible things. There's just no way to differentiate around that personality, but what you can do is ask - are they capable and able and interested in doing the job, and as long as I stay focused on that, the rest of it doesn't matter.

RAMONA MATHANY:

There's a pretty intense screening process but there's also an intuitive thing when you're interviewing about a hundred people a week that have criminal backgrounds. Watching the way that they sit down in the interview room, the way they look at you, the way that they answer their questions. Determining which ones are going to actually make the change and want to be a productive member of society - that gets pretty obvious and easier the more you do it.

BETH OLENSKI:

I don't think there's a big difference between either hiring people with backgrounds and hiring people that don't have one, I think the interview process is very similar. I think if the kind of questions you ask in general are very similar, there might be some specific things that you want to get clear on to make sure that the candidate is ready, is prepared, has a clear idea of what the job is. For us, we call that our - you know, honest interview, being able to make sure that the candidate is ready, that they have taken responsibility for what's happened, that they have the resources they need, the support network to make the transition into full time work, that they've had the resources before they came into the door. That's going to make them successful, but I think the kind of questions they ask are going to be very very similar. I don't think the interview looks a whole lot different, somebody coming in with or without a background.

PATRICE STANKAVICH:

There's always sort of balance between what I know and what I feel, and I think they have to play in the same sandbox. But I think what I've learned over time is that I do trust my gut but my gut is based around things that I've talked about before, confidences, being really clear about the job. If I really know what the hiring manager wants, then I can trust my gut because my gut is going to guide me in the direction of what is going to be the right fit for your organization in that position.

In our experience and in all my years of recruiting and staffing in HR, there is no crystal ball to be able to tell how somebody is going to do, regardless of their background. I don't think there's any specific question you can ask them or trick question to ask them to make sure that they're going to succeed. We never know, we hope that you ask the right questions you give them a really clear description of what the job is, as much as you can so there's no surprises, you try to find out if they could fit for the job, and you go from there.

We currently have the question in our application, but I have made it a point not to read the application prior to interview, I like to read their resume and I like to speak directly to them and ask them you know, what they've done previously, what their experience is for the particular position. Second chance individuals often times will reveal their criminal background at the time of interview without even being asked and if I see that as them being honest and being willing to be accountable for their actions, that is a very strong indicator that they are ready to have a full-time stable position and be a great team member for us.

PAM BRADY:

I've got a person's resume in front of me and it's not about so much about what's on that resume, if that's important, that's what got them in the door, sure. But when I'm doing an interview, I need to know a lot more about what are you going to provide for us, what kind of value would bring us, so what are your competencies, your attitude, your skills, are they going to be a great match for us in the future? I can ask questions about the resume but that's going to regurgitate everything that I can read. It's not so much about their past, it's much more about their future.

CORBETT GORDON:

Probably the most prevalent problem while hiring that people get into that causes legal problems is inconsistency. Interviewing one person and really clicking with that person, and getting into a conversation that's different than you have with the next applicant, maybe somebody you don't click with. And maybe the first applicant is more like you, and the second applicant is less like you, and therefore we tend to perpetuate and hire people of the same age, the same gender, the same categories of people in the workplace and that can be a problem. Or not necessarily hiring the best person, but we're hiring the person we feel most comfortable with during the interview. So what we need to do is have a set group of questions, that pertain exactly to the job and ask them of each applicant. Now follow up questions will obviously vary because the applicant's responses will vary, but you can avoid a lot of problems if you interview people consistently.