



Back to basics

Hiring Essentials Toolkit

Building your Dream Team

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Introduction to this toolkit



Recruiting and onboarding a new member to your business is a significant and demanding step, especially for small business owners who oversee it from start to end. There are specific legal requirements surrounding employee entitlements that employers need to be aware of but building your dream team goes beyond this.

The interview process should give employers peace of mind that they did indeed hire the right person; while during the onboarding process, the employee should gain peace of mind that they joined the right role and organisation.

This toolkit covers exactly that. It has been broken down to two parts: how to interview the right way and how best to integrate new hires with your existing team.

1. Interview Cheat Sheet

Interviews are an integral component of the recruitment process. This is when employers can ascertain whether the candidate has the necessary skills required for the position, and just as importantly, if they are a good fit for their business.

Interview questions can broadly be categorised into three groups: questions around experience, behaviour and situation. This section explains the significance behind these three categories and provides sample questions.

2. Three Stages of Onboarding

Even if you don't have a current plan in place, onboarding happens regardless. Understanding the importance of onboarding and having a concrete plan in place will make things more systematic and start the new employee off on the right foot.

This section breaks down the different stages of onboarding and provides practical advice for each stage.

Interview Cheat Sheet



Interview Cheat Sheet

Hiring new employees can be a tricky process, especially for small business owners, who may not recruit new employees all that regularly. There are certain legal requirements that need to be followed, but selecting the right person goes beyond this.

Interviews, when conducted properly, can be very effectual for both selection and elimination. During an interview, employers get to assess and test candidates' knowledge and experience, and ascertain if they are a good fit for their company.

It is necessary to plan your interview questions in advance and also take the time to review candidates' CVs so you can ask specific and relevant questions.

It is important to ask a combination of questions from different categories to get a thorough understanding of the candidate's abilities and potential. The type of questions can be broadly categorised as:



Category 1:
Experience-based questions



Category 2:
Behavioural questions



Category 3:
Situational questions

Before getting to the interviews, employers first have to sieve through a multitude of job applications and CVs. And at times candidates may either exaggerate and sometimes even lie about their experience.

Listen to our **Better Business Podcast** on '**How to Spot a Dodgy CV**' and learn how to better manage such situations.

[Click to listen!](#)

Better Business Podcast





Experience-based Questions

Experience-based Questions

Typically, the most common type of interview questions are experience-based.

These are designed to give the interviewer a thorough understanding of previous roles and experience, while noting transferrable skills that may be applicable for the current position.

They are generally open-ended questions, allowing the candidate to showcase their experience and expertise. Below are some experience-based questions you can ask.

- *What were your key learnings in your previous position?*
- *What were your responsibilities in that position?*
- *When I speak with your previous employer and ask which area of your work needs the most improvement, what will they say?*
- *How have you built rapport with clients/customers in previous roles?*
- *What are some tips and tricks you use to keep yourself organised?*
- *What did an average week look like for you in your previous position?*
- *What were your key performance indicators?*
- *Describe a situation where others you were working with on a project disagreed with your ideas and what you did as a result of that.*

- *Tell me about a time you took the lead in a work project.*
- *Tell me about a time you worked in a team where you had to overcome a challenge together.*
- *Tell me about a time you had to analyse information and make recommendations to a senior stakeholder.*
- *Describe a time when you decided, on your own, that something needed to be done, and you took on the responsibility to get it done.*
- *Describe a time in which you had to use your fact-finding skills to gain information for solving a problem.*
- *Tell me about a time you were involved in a project and what role you played.*
- *Talk to me about a project you were involved with from concept to delivery.*



Behavioural Questions

Behavioural Questions

The concept of a behavioural question is based on the assumption that past behaviour is the best predictor of future behaviour.

Behavioural questions are a big part of many job interviews. They determine if candidates have the skills and competencies needed for the job.

Behavioural-based interview questions can be further sub-divided to questions centred around the following themes:

- Teamwork
- Leadership
- Conflict-handling
- Problem-solving
- Lessons from past mistakes

Below are sample questions for each of the sub categories.

Teamwork interview questions:

- Describe a project that required input from people at different levels in the organisation.
- Tell me about a time that you were a part of a team that successfully delivered, and what role you played.
- Describe a situation where others you were working with on a project disagreed with your ideas.

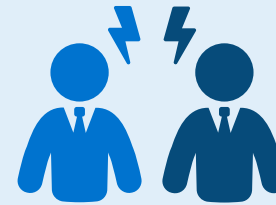


- Describe a situation in which you had to arrive at a compromise or help others to compromise. What steps did you take?
- Tell me about a time when you had to work as a part of a team that did not get along. What was the result of the project you were working on?
- What was the biggest mistake you have made when delegating work as part of a team project?
- Tell me about a time when you had to settle a dispute between team members. How did you go about identifying the issues?
- What have you found to be the difficult part of being a member, not a leader of a group?

Behavioural Questions

Leadership interview questions:

- *Have you coached or mentored anyone to achieve success?*
- *Can you give me an example of when you have had to take a leadership role for an initiative?*
- *Tell me about the challenges you have experienced as a leader using examples as a basis for your answer.*
- *Tell me about a team project where you had to take charge. How did you take charge?*
- *Describe a leadership role outside of work. Why did you commit your time to this?*
- *What is the toughest group that you have ever had to lead and what were the obstacles?*
- *What has been your greatest leadership achievement in a professional environment?*
- *What has been the greatest obstacle you have faced in building/growing a team?*
- *Describe a time when you have been responsible for leading a team and completing the same tasks as your team members. How did you balance your time?*



Conflict-handling interview questions:

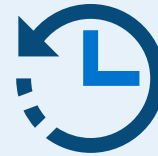
- *Give me an example of a time you had to respond to an unhappy manager/client/colleague.*
- *Talk to me about a situation where you have had to deal with conflicting priorities.*
- *Has there ever been a situation where you have had conflict with a superior? If so, how did you handle it?*
- *Can you think of an example of a time where you had to settle an argument between two of your colleagues?*
- *Describe a situation where you managed to have two co-workers who dislike each other to work together co-operatively?*
- *Talk about a time when your performance was less than your supervisor expected.*

Behavioural Questions



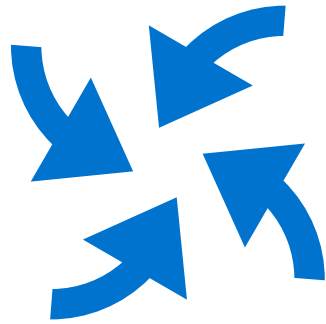
Problem-solving interview questions:

- *Tell me about a time that you identified a need and went above and beyond the call of duty to get things done.*
- *Give me an example of when you have had to use your problem-solving skills to overcome insurmountable odds.*
- *Give me an example of a time you were unable to complete a task because you had inadequate information to reach a good decision.*
- *Tell me about a time you were put under a large amount of pressure at work and how you successfully delivered results.*
- *What would you do if you have identified something in the workplace that needs improving but does not fall under your responsibilities?*



Interview questions for lessons from past mistakes:

- *What was your biggest professional mistake and how did you learn from it?*
- *Can you give me an example of where you have encountered issues in your previous roles and what you did to overcome them?*
- *Tell me about a time you received negative feedback from your manager. How did you handle this?*
- *Tell me about a time where you were struggling to hit your KPIs and what did you do to change this?*
- *Can you give me a time you dealt with a challenging, difficult or disgruntled client/customer and how did you resolve their issue?*
- *Tell me about a time you had conflict with a colleague and how did you settle this?*
- *Describe a situation when you failed to meet a deadline, what did you fail to do and what did you learn?*



Situational Questions

Situational Questions

Similar to behavioural-based interview questions, situational questions are designed to provide employers with insight to a candidate's ability to perform well in changing environments and situations.

Situational questions help employers gain insight to how well the candidate can get the job done, solve complex problems, and resolve conflicts.

Below are some situational-based interview questions you can ask.

→ *Describe the kind of work environment where you perform your best work.*

→ *Please provide an example of an improvement you made at your previous job that made a real difference.*

→ *What is the biggest challenge you have faced in the workplace and how did you solve it?*

→ *What would you do if you were working on an important project and the priorities were changed suddenly?*

→ *Tell me about a time when your initiative resulted in a change in the business?*

→ *Describe a situation where you were successfully able to use your persuasion skills to convince someone to approach things your way?*



→ *Tell me an example of a time when you had to go above and beyond your job description to get a task done.*

→ *Give me about a time you had to think outside the box to resolve a problem. What was the outcome?*

→ *You're responsible for an important project and you are near completion but receive another important project that must be completed immediately. How would you multi-task and prioritise?*

→ *Tell me about a time you had to work at a fast pace. How did you stay motivated?*

→ *There has been a change in your team recently which you do not personally agree with. What would you do?*

Situational Questions

- *When you are working on a team project, one member contributes significantly less than others. How do you approach this person?*
- *Two senior managers request your help with equally important tasks at the same time. How do you manage your workload?*
- *Tell me about a time where you had to tell a colleague or manager that you were unable to complete a task that they had requested of you.*
- *Give me an example of a time when you had to make a fast decision and you didn't have all the facts.*
- *Tell me about a time you created a project plan and factors outside of your control interfered. How did you get back on track?*
- *Tell me about a time you made a business decision that you later regretted. What did you learn from this experience?*
- *Give me a specific example of a time you had to conform to a policy with which you did not agree. How did you handle that situation?*

Download your free interview form template!

Customise the document with the interview questions that are relevant to you.

The image shows a preview of an interview form template. The form is titled "INTERVIEW FORM" and is divided into several sections. On the left, there is a section for candidate information, including fields for "CANDIDATE NAME", "POSITION TITLE", "POSITION DEPARTMENT", "INTERVIEW DATE", "DESCRIPTION OF POSITION", "DATE AVAILABLE", and "SALARY EXPECTATION". Below this is a "WORK EXPERIENCE" table with columns for "Name", "Year", "Start", and "End". The main body of the form is divided into two columns: "EXPERIENCE-BASED QUESTIONS" and "CANDIDATE ANSWERS". There are three rows of questions, each with a "SITUATIONAL" question on the left and a "CANDIDATE ANSWERS" column on the right. A large red circle with a white downward-pointing arrow is overlaid on the form, indicating that it is available for download.

3 Stages of Onboarding



3 Stages of Onboarding

It is essential to map the right journey for your employees from the very start of their employment.

This begins with onboarding. Onboarding is the process for new employees to learn the necessary tools and knowledge to perform their job well. It also aims to integrate them with the business and its culture successfully.

There are 3 main stages when it comes to onboarding.



Stage 1: Pre-employment tasks

Ensure that your business is well prepared to welcome the new recruit to the organisation, this includes developing an orientation plan.



Stage 2: Engaging a new employee

Ensure that the new employee feels welcomed in the workplace. This will not only help in retention but also job performance.



Stage 3: Probation period

The probationary period provides you with an opportunity to assess the new employee's suitability for the role.



Stage 1: Pre-employment Checklist

Stage 1: Pre-employment Checklist

It is essential to have all the paperwork in place prior to the employee's start date. Below is a checklist to help business owners get started.

Contractual elements

	Letter of offer
	Employee handbook
	Fair Work Information Statement
	Standard Schedule of Terms
	Employee form
	Tax File Declaration form or relevant
	Receipt of property form
	Other department forms (if applicable)

Employee documents

	Driver's license or passport
	Visa details (if applicable)
	Referee details

Policies to outline

	Hours of work, breaks, etc.
	Layout of premises - fire exits and first aid facilities
	Facilities like toilets, kitchen facilities, etc.

Stage 2: Engaging a New Employee

Stage 2: Engaging a New Employee

This stage is often neglected given the demands of day-to-day work. Many employers feel once they have hired the right person and met the demands of the paperwork, their duty is over.

It is crucial to ensure that the new employee feels welcomed in the workplace. This will not only help in retention but also job performance. There are several ways to engage a new employee, below we explore a few them.

Show them that you were expecting them

Ensure that your current employees are aware of the new hire and know his/her name and role. Similarly, their supervisor/manager should have the necessary tools, devices, uniform, etc. already in place for the new employee. They should not be scrambling for these supplies upon the new hire's arrival.

Employers can also consider including a welcome basket. This can include office supplies such as stationary, snacks, a gift card for a café nearby, etc. Just as importantly, it is good to include a welcome letter that outlines important policies and procedures such as dress code, breaks, etc.

Assign a work mate

It is always good to have an assigned peer that the employee can turn to for general advice and clarifications rather than having to turn to their manager. This will allow the manager to focus on the responsibilities of the role rather than generic office-related queries.



Essentially the role of the mate is to:

- ✓ Provide information on policies and procedures
- ✓ Add some colour to the onboarding process
- ✓ Enable the new hire to be knowledgeable about department and company practices in a shorter period
- ✓ Help out with routine questions that we all have in our first few days of work
- ✓ Increase new hire's self-confidence

It is always good for the assigned mate to reach out to the new employee before their first day of work to introduce themselves.

Stage 2: Engaging a New Employee

Introduce new hire to the team

Take the time to individually introduce the new hire to the team and even schedule informal chats with each and every member where he/she gets to spend 10 to 15 minutes learning about each employee and their roles.

This will not only help them to get to know the team better and in a less overwhelming manner, it will help them understand the structure of the company from within and get a better understanding of how their new role fits into the workings of the business.



It is always daunting starting a new job - in an unfamiliar company with new faces. To help guide your new employee through this, it is always helpful to have a simple print out or a pdf that features current employees' photographs, names, and designations. This will help alleviate some of the anxiety of having to remember several names at once.

Start with small and manageable tasks

You may have big plans for the new employee which may have been discussed and addressed during the interview process. But no matter how experienced and competent the employee, it is always good practise to start off with small and manageable tasks.

Give him/her some time to assimilate into the company and its culture. Starting them off with small and manageable tasks will also help to boost their self-confidence.



Stage 3: Probation Period

Stage 3: Probation Period

A probationary period allows employers the opportunity to assess a new employee's capability, reliability and suitability for the job. The standard period varies from 3, 6 to 12 months.

A probationary period is not a separate form of employment, therefore new employees receive the same benefits as existing ones.

During probation

During the probationary period, employers may hold regular reviews in order to give the employee necessary support and feedback. Reviews also allow both parties to voice any concerns they may be having.

End of probation

As soon as the probationary period is complete, an employer should let the employee know whether they have passed. If unsuccessful, an employer has the choice of extending their probationary period or ending their employment. When extending probation or terminating an employee due to poor performance, an employer should be mindful of other protections including unfair dismissal and adverse action.

Probation periods FAQ

Probation periods often cause a level of uncertainty. The Fair Work Act 2009 does not set out any specific legislative requirements when it comes to probation periods, however, they still feature prominently in employment contracts and are lawful. The next page features some frequently asked questions and their respective responses.



Stage 3: Probation Period

? What is a probationary period?

A probation period is a time in which new employees work under probationary terms. Depending on the type of business, a probation period may last from any length of time between one month to several years. This affords employers the opportunity to assess their new employees.

? What is the benefit of having a probationary period?

A probationary period gives you the opportunity to assess whether your new employee is capable, reliable and suitable for the job. It is important to note, the length of the probation must be included in all employment contracts. This is not a separate period of employment so employees under probation will have the same rights to their entitlements.

? Do casual and temporary employees have a probationary period?

Probationary periods of employment are generally not applicable to casual or temporary contracts. This is because generally, these categories of employees do not have a notice period.

? What must I do if I decide to terminate an employee's employment during probation?

If you decide to dismiss a probationary employee, you should ensure you are in a position to prove the reason for dismissal and show it was conducted with procedural fairness. Visit EmploySure's guide on [Dismissal and Termination](#) for more information.



? Can probationary periods be extended?

Probationary periods can be extended, so long as you provide fair and reasonable grounds to do so. The extension must also be agreed upon by both parties in writing.

? What should I do when the probationary period is over?

As soon as the probationary period is over, let your employee know whether they have passed. Always have a written record of this discussion. If the employee is dismissed, they are entitled to have their unused leave paid out.

Conclusion

Every employer knows the value of good staff. With good staff comes improved culture, increased profitability, and client/customer retention. An individual may be very good at their job but that wouldn't necessarily make them a good employee. Good employees need to be honed and moulded. And this begins with onboarding.



EmploySURE is the largest provider of employment relations and workplace health and safety services in Australia, servicing over 20,000 clients nationally.

Why EmploySURE?

At EmploySURE, we believe all Australian employers, no matter the size, deserve access to comprehensive, quality, honest advice and support that is scalable to the needs of their business.

Since the introduction of the Fair Work Act in 2009, workplace obligations have become more complex and difficult to manage, especially for overstretched small business owners.

EmploySURE was established in response to these challenges. It is our aim to ensure Australian business owners have access to cost-effective, professional advice on all employment relations and work health and safety matters.

What we offer.

EmploySURE provides customised documentation, unlimited advice, policy and procedure review, insurance and legal representation for small business owners.

Being an EmploySURE client means no surprises – we keep our clients updated on Award changes, wage updates and essential compliance issues. Our advisers are available 24 hours a day to guide employers through any difficulties they may face.

Visit employSURE.com.au for more information.



EmploySURE has given me the freedom to run my business in a way that I need to. It's given me the time and it's actually taken away a lot of worry that I previously had.

Kieran Syme | DentFree AutoTree



Google can only help you so far. Sooner or later you need to actually talk to somebody who is an expert in the field and that's where I found EmploySURE.

Ursula Zajaczkowski | The Source Bulk Foods



Biggest thing from EmploySURE, it gives us certainty. Where we have guidance and help of what we need in place, how to put it in place, and how to implement the systems for HR.

Jonathon Greal | Niche Reform