THE COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO INTERVIEWING FOR YOUR SMALL BUSINESS
What is Zane Benefits?

Zane Benefits is the leader in individual health insurance reimbursement for small businesses. Since 2006, Zane Benefits has been on a mission to bring the benefits of individual health insurance to business owners and their employees.

Zane Benefits’ software helps businesses reimburse employees for individual health insurance plans for annual savings of 20 to 60 percent compared with traditional employer-provided health insurance. Today, over 20,000 customers use Zane Benefits’ software, services, and support to reimburse individual health insurance plans purchased independent of employment.

Zane Benefits’ software has been featured on the front-page of *The Wall Street Journal, USA Today, and The New York Times*. Zane Benefits was founded in 2006 and is based in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Zane Benefits’ Partner Program is an opportunity for insurance professionals to provide clients with custom Zane Benefits solutions. Request a Partner Evaluation at www.ZaneBenefits.com/Partners.

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INTRODUCTION

Interviewing. The most important aspect of the hiring process. And you've done plenty of it.
The question is, are you doing it correctly and is there a right or wrong way to interview?

The truth is, poor hiring decisions cost a lot of money. Some studies predict that every time
a business replaces a salaried employee, it costs 6 to 9 months’ salary on average (source).
For a manager making $40,000 a year, that’s $20,000 to $30,000 in recruiting and training
expenses.

And with so much to do, most small business owners simply don’t have the time to research
interviewing best practices. If this song sounds all too familiar, you’re not alone. In fact, did
you know most managers only spend 1 percent of their time on training and development -
which includes hiring (source)?

So, what’s the solution? Is there a place where you can find everything you need to
interview efficiently without spending hours researching? Absolutely.

To save you loads of time, we’ve put together a definitive guide to interviewing. This guide
is designed to help you learn everything you need to know about interviewing in one spot.
This quick guide provides advice, tips, and printable tools to make interviewing easy.
HOW DOES INTERVIEWING IMPACT YOUR BUSINESS?

You don't have a lot of time to devote to interviewing best practices, and it's impacting your small business. But the truth is, you need to set aside time to understand the ins and outs of interviewing.

Why?

Interviewing determines the types of employees who will work for you. The types of employees who work for you will determine how well your customers are treated and satisfied with your product or service. And your customers will determine your small business's success.

Simply stated, interviewing is the most important step you take towards a successful business. Now, knowing how interviewing impacts your business, let's go over the ins and outs of interviewing.
INTERVIEWING AND THE LAW

First, it is important to know that there are certain laws to follow when interviewing. Fair hiring laws such as Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 are in place to give candidates a fair chance during the interview process. Yet, few small business owners actually know what these laws are.

Tip: Make sure you and your interview team is briefed on these guidelines to keep your business in compliance.
A good rule of thumb to follow is to avoid questions that will reveal information that can lead to bias in hiring. You can ask questions that relate to job performance.

**Affiliations.** Do not ask about clubs, social organizations, or union membership; do ask about relevant professional associations.

**Age.** Do not ask a candidate's age other than, “if hired,” can a candidate produce proof that he or she is 18 years of age.

**Criminal record.** Do not ask if a candidate has been arrested; you may ask if the candidate has ever been convicted of a crime.

**Marital/family status.** Questions about marital status and family issues are discouraged except as they relate to job performance.

**Personal.** Avoid questions related to appearance, home ownership, and personal financial situation.

**Race/color.** No race-related questions are legal.
**QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK IN AN INTERVIEW**

*Alcohol and drug use.* The only allowable question relating to current or past drug or alcohol use is, “Do you currently use illegal drugs?”

*Culture/natural and origin.* You may ask if the individual can, “upon hire,” provide proof of legal right to work in the United States. You may ask about language fluency if it is relevant to job performance.

*Disability.* You may ask if candidates can perform essential job functions, with or without reasonable accommodation; and you may ask them to demonstrate how they would perform a job-related function. You may ask about prior attendance records. And you may require candidates to undergo a medical exam after an offer of employment has been made.

*Religion.* If Saturday or Sunday is a required work day, you may ask candidates if they will have a problem working on those days.

*Sex.* You may ask if a candidate has ever worked under another name. Be sure not to make gender-related assumptions about job capabilities.
Knowing what is and is not legal to ask a candidate, you can now begin to plan out how you're going to conduct an effective interview. Here are 8 simple steps.

**Step 1** - Write down 7 to 10 general questions to ask candidates. See page 13 for printable questions and an interviewing checklist.

**Step 2** - Set up a time. Contact your candidate and request a convenient time for the interview. Remember to confirm the time on the day the interview is scheduled as a reminder, or send a calendar invitation.

**Step 3** - Review candidate's resume ahead of time. Write down any questions you have about past positions.
Step 4 - Get prepared. Gather a pen, notebook, and your questions.

Step 5 - Be ready. When your candidate arrives, be ready to interview. Don't make them wait on you.

Step 6 - Conduct an organized interview. For interview techniques and ideas, go to page 10.

Step 7 - Take notes. Write down thoughts that come to your mind during the interview.

Step 8 - Be courteous. Escort the candidate out of your building when the interview is over.
To select the right candidate, don’t blindly jump into the interview process. Prepare for interviewing candidates by asking:

- Will we prescreen candidates? If so, how?
- What style of interview(s) will we conduct?
- What questions will we ask?
- How will we evaluate or score candidates?
- Which team members will participate?
- How will we check references?

**Tip:** Every small business is unique. Develop a consistent interview process that allows you to spend time with the most qualified candidates and evaluate candidates for both skill and company fit.
INTERVIEWING TECHNIQUES

There are many ways to interview a candidate, but certain techniques may be more effective than others. Knowing this, let's talk about what you can do in order to have a fruitful interview.

**Put yourself in the candidate's shoes.** This technique helps you see the interview from their view. Evaluate how you feel the interview is going and make adjustments along the way. For example, if the interview feels dry and boring, try something fun to loosen up.

**Set the tone and control the interview.** Make the most of the interviewing time by setting expectations up front with the candidate about what to expect during the interview. Set the tone to be reflective of your company culture (ex: professional, casual, etc.). And, don't be afraid to interrupt the candidate and redirect them as they're answering questions. This helps you take control of the interview and makes sure that your interview time is most efficient.

**Interview as a team.** Rather than taking on the interviewing by yourself, have a few team members take 10 minutes to interview your candidate.

**Conduct a personality test.** Personality tests can help you know how a candidate would mesh with your company culture.
INTERVIEWING TECHNIQUES (CONT.)

Be mindful of body language. If you’re crossing your legs or folding your arms, all of this is showing you’re not open to your candidate. Sit upright, relax, and make good eye contact with your candidate. Smile, and get engaged in the conversation. Also, take note of your candidate’s body language.

Watch for red flags. If a candidate is unable to tell you about your company or why they want to work for you, this is a red flag. If they’re late to the interview, do not have a career path, or cannot name a weakness, these are also red flags to watch and ask follow up questions to understand if the candidate is a good fit. Don’t be afraid to address questions or concerns directly.

Talk about health benefits. If you want a candidate to work for you, you’ll need to bring up the health insurance benefits you offer. Whether you offer a group health plan or you reimburse your employees for individual health insurance, your candidate will want to know what you offer and how it will benefit them.

Ask the candidate what questions they have. Asking the candidate what questions they have will demonstrate if they have prepared and done their research.

Put the candidate to the test. One effective way to measure a candidate’s job qualifications is to put them to the test. During the interview process give them a job-related project to demonstrate a skill. For example, if hiring a sales representative have them do a sample sales demo. Hiring a graphic designer? Have them design a brochure for your company. Evaluate the finished project and give them constructive feedback. Their work, and their response to your feedback, will tell you a lot about their professionalism.
Once you have gone through an interview with your candidate, there's still one last step - follow up. Just as you expect a candidate to be respectful of your time, respect theirs as well. It will speak volumes to how you do business.

How can you do this? Start by sending an email thanking the candidate for their time and include a few key things you enjoyed and learned. Then, set a deadline by which you will respond for a second interview, or to let them know if they will be offered the position. Mark these dates on your calendar with a reminder so you don't forget.

Lastly, if you decide not to hire a candidate, let them know as soon as possible so they have ample time to continue their job search.
PRINTABLE TOOLS FOR INTERVIEWING

Keeping track of everything during an interview can be difficult. So, to make your interview process more efficient and favorable, the next few pages are designed with you in mind.

You can print off each page and check off tasks in order to visually understand where you are with each candidate in the interview process. The sample interview questions are meant to be a foundation. Use them to get ideas of questions you might like to ask and formulate your more detailed questions from them.

Continue to the next page to print off your sample questions and candidate interviewing checklist. Then, you’re ready to start interviewing.
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Tell me about your professional life.
2. What interests you in working for our company?
3. Tell me about your education.
4. Why have you chosen this particular field?
5. Describe your best/worst boss.
6. In a job, what interests you most/least?
7. What is your major weakness?
8. Give an example of how you solved a problem in the past.
9. What are your strengths?
10. How do others describe you?
11. What do you consider the most important idea you contributed or your most noteworthy accomplishment in your last job?
12. Where do you see yourself in three years?
13. Think about something you consider a failure in your life, and tell me why you think it happened.
14. How do you think you will fit into this operation?
15. Do you have any questions for me?

Additional Notes: ___________________________________________________________
INTERVIEW CANDIDATE CHECKLIST

Candidate Name: __________________________
Date of Interview: _______________________
Time of Interview: _______________________
Position Applying For: _____________________

**Before the Interview**

☐ Set up time with candidate to interview. Mark your calendar and set a reminder.

☐ Review what can and cannot be said during an interview. Share this information with anyone who will be helping in the interview process.

☐ Before the interview, review the candidate’s resume and LinkedIn profile.

☐ Prepare specific interview questions for each candidate. If you have a personality test, get it ready.

☐ Have candidate’s resume ready to read either on paper or laptop.

☐ Prepare a room for the interview. Preparation for an interview room can include:

  - Comfortable chair for candidate and interviewer.
  - Beverage or snack.
  - Correct room temperature.
  - Computer, projector, or tablet for demonstrations.
  - Pen and paper, or laptop, to take notes.

☐ Have candidate’s resume ready to read either on paper or laptop.

☐ Make sure your calendar is clear to meet the candidate on time. Clear any meetings which are close to the time of the interview to avoid tardiness.
After the Interview

☐ After interview is complete, walk candidate to front door of office and thank them for coming.

☐ Send thank you email to candidate with a set date when you will get back to them. Set a reminder in on your calendar to do so.

☐ If your interview process is longer than a week, keep candidate updated every week on the process to avoid confusion and frustration.

Additional Items

☐ ____________________________

☐ ____________________________

☐ ____________________________
Though interviewing can be time-consuming, it’s essential to the success of your small business. Yet, if you’re not dedicating enough time to understanding how to interview, you run the risk of hiring under-qualified employees.

Our resource, The Comprehensive Guide to Interviewing For Your Small Business, is where you can find everything you need to conduct fruitful, time-efficient interviews.

Following these simple interviewing techniques provides you with the necessary tools to help you feel confident as you interview candidates for your small business.
View our Library of Free HR and Benefit Resources at:

www.ZaneBenefits.com/Resources
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