



 HANDLER

How to Use an Interview as a Competitive Advantage

Ensuring interviews land top talent





Equipping hiring managers to conduct an effective interview

The importance of an interview for everyone involved

It's no secret how important an interview is - for both sides of the table.

The interviewer and interviewee are both trying to determine if this is the right fit. When it comes to interviewing executives, there's even more importance.

As a top Atlanta executive search firm, we get the luxury of hearing from both candidates and hiring managers in our searches. There's often a disconnect in how the interview went, and many times this comes from hiring managers not being prepared at the level they need to be prepared for to recruit this executive in their company.

It makes sense as the majority of hiring managers (especially those interviewing executives) are going from meeting to meeting, interview to interview - they aren't stopping to reflect and think about how

important an interview is for an executive both before, during and after the interview.

Without thoughtfulness, it's not going to be a thoughtful experience for the candidate.

Thoughtful experiences for the candidates interviewing is more important than ever before. Interviews create not just the first, but all of the impressions for the company - from culture to people and more. And you can not get that first impression back.

Interviewing, for many leaders, is not a consistent activity. We could all use a refresher. Sometimes you'll do 10 interviews in one month and then you won't interview again for 3-4 months. You can get out of practice quickly.

It's time to get back into best practices. We hope you'll share with others and use this as a reference guide over and over again.



What's your "Likability Factor?"

It's never been more important to connect personally with someone. People forget the single most important thing in an interview is to initially connect with them as a human. Be personable. We talk to candidates a lot about the "likability factor," but that works 2 ways. You're selling your likability as an employer just like the candidate is selling their likeability to you. Find common ground. If you can connect with someone personally first, open the door for a meaningful candidate experience.

Prepare for more than 2 minutes.

Being prepared shows a tremendous amount of respect for a candidate. They know you're taking the time seriously, which reflects excellence and a differentiator for landing top talent.

Corporate Culture and Values.

Culture is what most candidates are hungry for after the pandemic. They're crystal clear based on experiences what culture they will thrive in and what cultures they will no longer accept. They are looking for the right fit.

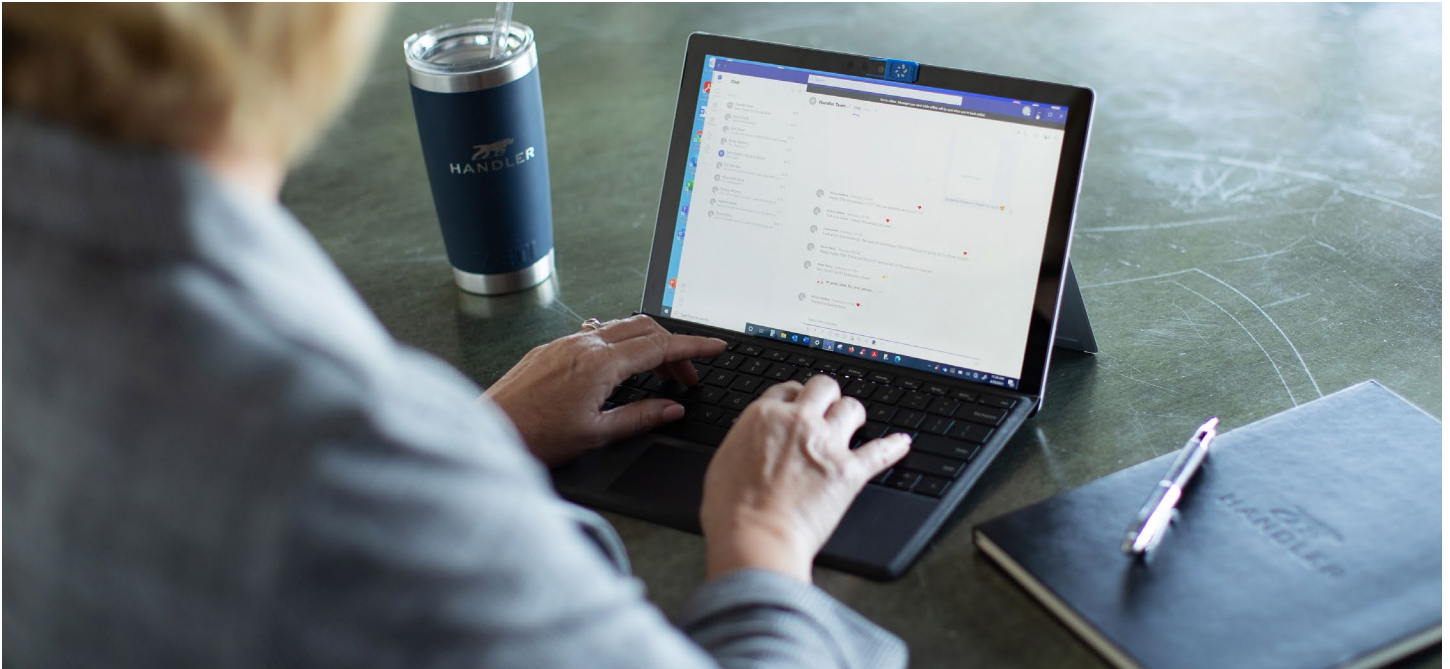
Expect to pay more.

Candidates are asking for higher levels of compensation (more than ever). It's important to remember compensation has a place for discussion. You shouldn't be talking about it early in the process. It is only brought up once you're serious about a candidate. Don't talk about it too early or you could potentially send the wrong message.

Do This, Not That!

8 common executive interview mistakes and what you should ask instead.

Don't: So, tell me about yourself!	Do: To the degree you would like to share, I'd like to hear about your growing-up years: family, activities in high school, early academic/ leadership achievements, and passion at an early age. Note: Be prepared to share the same about you (as the hiring manager)
Don't: Work History: Ask the candidate to start with the First job to most recent – for each job you've held, please describe with lots of detail	Do: Tell me about your career journey and why you made the decision(s) to leave previous roles and accept new ones.
Don't: Encourage candidate to disclose confidential or disparaging information regarding their current employer	Do: What 3 aspects of your current position do you enjoy the most?
Don't: Describe your leadership style.	Do: We all have that one special leader and mentor we respected in our careers. What specifically did you like about that person's management style?
Don't: Today's marketplace is changing by the hour. Do you like change?	Do: Either personally or professionally, what is the biggest change you've ever dealt with? How did you adapt?
Don't: What would you say are your strengths and weaker points in detail?	Do: What areas are you working on professionally to further develop? What makes you an effective leader?
Don't: What do you do in your spare time?	Do: What's the most interesting thing about you that isn't on your resume?
Don't: Did you have a chance to read our company website?	Do: Will you describe what the primary business our company is and why you would be excited about our future?



What You *Really* Need to Know

Your Preparation is Essential.

Have a deep understanding of the role you are hiring for especially the “must have’s” experience you seek. Ensure you have properly studied the candidate’s background and skills. Prepare your questions prior to the meeting to address any gaps you may perceive.

Likeability and Connection Trump Everything Else.

In today’s economy, candidates tell us all the time culture fit matters more than anything else. Take time early in the interview to connect with the candidate at a transparent and welcoming level. This allows each person to lower stress levels for honest discussion. Exhibit caution bringing up compensation too early in the discussion. First, focus on ensuring the right skills, the right culture fit, and that you feel confident the candidate is excited to join the team.

It’s a Two-Way Interaction.

You (the hiring manager) are creating impressions about your company. Your preparation for the interview is both respectful and demonstrates excellence. The candidate is considering a future with you just like you are considering the candidate. Conduct it like a conversation rather than an interrogation. Most importantly, “recruit” - you have the best role at the best company to share!

Document Immediately Upon Completion.

Our clients use everything from email to multi-page feedback forms. The point we make here is to build in time to document the interview in detail. The best time to do that is immediate while everything stays top of mind and before the other 12 meetings you have in the day. This documentation will allow you to make a sound and relatively fast decision regarding an offer of employment. This will be a differentiator in today’s highly competitive talent market.

Go All In

Hiring top talent and leaders worth following has never been more intense.

Lack of preparation and thought is the biggest mistake that we've seen when it comes to interviewing. Even just spending time thinking through your goals can be a huge win. You have to be in the right mindset. Candidates will know if you aren't. Remember: You are selling your company just as much as the candidate is selling themselves. They need to understand why this role is essential and exciting. People want to make an impact. Know how this position will make an impact on your company. Be highly engaged.

Our hope is that you'll use this report as quick refresher each time you prepare to recruit or interview a great candidate.

