



## INTRODUCTION TO PEER INTERVIEWING



By the year 2030, the aging services sector will need 3.5 million additional direct care workers — a frightening projection considering 99% of skilled nursing facilities and 96% of assisted livings across the country already indicate that they are short of staff. Because of this challenging labor market, it is common for providers to expedite the hiring process to fulfill staffing schedules. Despite the desperation felt, that is not always the most effective practice. Retaining staff is equally — or arguably more important — than recruiting new team members. Between the high cost of turnover and the disruption of services while hiring and onboarding new team members, it's often better to focus on hiring well and keeping the staff you have.

One way to improve the quality and retention of new hires is to implement a Peer Interviewing process, as it is a proven way to engage teams in supporting the success of new hires. Peer Interviews have been shown to decrease turnover, as the hiring team becomes more invested in the success of their selected team member (Pentilla, 2005).

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### WHAT IS PEER INTERVIEWING?

“Peer interviewing is a process for hiring employees that utilizes the people within the organization to gain a more complete idea of a candidate’s appropriateness for a position,” (Rask & Smith, 2006). This is not a hiring manager or an HR representative (unless the position posted is in the HR department), the peer interviewer should be someone in the same role, similar role, or at least within the same department as the open position. This key stage of the interview process allows for team members who know the role best, and who know the team dynamics best, a voice in who is recruited to fill the position.

Quality Peer Interview teams include a diverse group of Peer Interviewers in terms of race, sex, maturity, length of employment, geography, specialty, education, etc.

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## WHY INCLUDE PEER INTERVIEWING?

When colleagues are given a voice in hiring a new member of the team, it increases buy-in, accountability, and camaraderie. Hiring someone gives an innate sense of responsibility in that person's success.

It also demonstrates trust in the members of that work group – trust that they know the job tasks, the organizational culture, and the strengths and weaknesses of the existing team members. It shows that leaders respect and value the opinion and expertise of all staff.

Peer interviewing allows candidates to get a better read on the team, and a clearer vision of what the day-to-day responsibilities include. According to SHRM, 77% of job seekers consider relationships with coworkers to be a crucial component of workplace engagement. It can provide a more relaxed and less intimidating environment where they may be more apt to ask important questions to determine fit. Team members can often answer more detailed questions about daily tasks than HR staff or hiring managers can answer.

At a time when nearly every organization is understaffed and in desperate need of caregivers, leaders can often feel pressure to hire people simply to fill the open position to meet staff demand. The Studer Group suggests that Peer Interviews actually relieve some of the pressures to hire, stating, “Peers will not lower the bar as much as the leader may feel pressure to do so. Why? They are the ones who are most impacted by a mis-hire. It is very common for people to say to their manager after interviewing a candidate, “We would rather work short-staffed than work with that person,” (Studer, 2022). So not only are Peer Interview teams more invested in those who are hired, but they get a more holistic understanding of the candidate pool and the complexities of selecting new hires.

## SUCCESSFUL PEER INTERVIEWING

Interviewing and hiring practices require solid oversight from human resources professionals to ensure policies are followed and bias is avoided, so it is important that staff involved in Peer Interviewing are appropriately trained. “Training should focus on gaining an understanding of the selection process, developing performance standards, listening to briefings on illegal questions, drafting behavioral-based questions, and learning interviewing techniques,” (Rask & Smith, 2006). Staff who participate in Peer Interviewing should be carefully selected and include those employees that are high-performing and highly dedicated to the organization's values.

Successful Peer Interviews occur after the applicant list has been narrowed to final candidates. The hiring manager should approve of any candidates going into the Peer Interview process for hire, as the staff on the Peer Interview team must have a legitimate say in who is offered the position. If the hiring manager ultimately selects an applicant that goes against the opinion of the Peer Interviewers, then the process will undermine the expertise and value of the team. In short, best practice is to only advance candidates that leaders are comfortable hiring.

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Sources: University of Virginia: <https://hr.virginia.edu/sites/default/files/PDFs/peer-interview-expectations.pdf>  
University Wisconsin Stout: <http://www2.uwstout.edu/content/rs/2006/17rasksmith.pdf>  
Pentilla, C. (2005, January). Peering in. *Entrepreneur*, 33(1), 70-72.  
*Why peer interviewing pays off, even during a staff shortage*, Studer 2022  
*Turning the Tables on High Turnover with Peer Interviewing*, Brown & Underwood, 2017  
*Behavioral Based Interview Questions*, Studer Group

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# PEER INTERVIEW SCORING SHEET

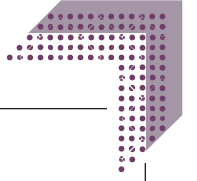
Name of Candidate \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Interview \_\_\_\_\_

Position \_\_\_\_\_

Peer Interviewer \_\_\_\_\_ Total Score \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Presentation</b> 5 = Excellent, 4 = Good, 3 = Average, 2 = Below Average, 1 = No Answer	5	4	3	2	1	Comments
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Peer Interviewer						
Why are you a good coworker/what do you look for in good coworkers?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Describe your teamwork skills.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Describe how you typically communicate with coworkers and customers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
How do you navigate disagreements with coworkers? Provide an example of a time you had a challenging situation with a coworker and how you resolved it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
How have you motivated colleagues in the past?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
How would previous colleagues describe you?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	



<b>Presentation</b> <i>5 = Excellent, 4 = Good,          3 = Average, 2 = Below Average,          1 = No Answer</i>	5	4	3	2	1	Comments
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Peer Interviewer						
Do you work better independently or with a team? Why?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
What type of environment do you work best in?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
If a coworker asked you for help while you were already busy, how would you respond?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
What previous work accomplishments are you most proud of?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
What has frustrated or irritated you in previous jobs?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
What motivates you?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
What practices or policies have you experienced in previous jobs that you enjoyed?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
What is important to you at work?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Tell me about a time you had a challenge at work and came up with a creative way to solve that problem.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
What responsibilities do you want to have in this job?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	



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# ILLEGAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

To prevent discrimination lawsuits, below is a list of unacceptable inquiries and questions which cannot be asked during the interview. This list is not exhaustive.

## **SALARY**

Asking a candidate their current or salary history is prohibited.

## **NATIONAL ORIGIN OR ANCESTRY**

Nationality; lineage; national origin; whether applicant is citizen of another country; Ethnic association of a surname; Birthplace of applicant or relatives; Nationality or spouses, parents or other relatives; date of arrival in U.S.; how long a resident; applicant's native language; Avoid all questions on Race/Ethnicity/National Origin

## **GENDER AND FAMILY ARRANGEMENT**

Marital status; spouse's, parents' or other family members' occupation' maiden name; number of dependents; childcare arrangements; plans for children; who do you live with; do you live with parents; sex of applicant; sexual orientation. Avoid all questions relating to gender and sexual orientation.

## **RELIGION**

Religious affiliation; religious holidays observed.

## **PHYSICAL CONDITION**

If applicant has a disability; nature or severity of a disability; past medical problems; genetic conditions; have you ever filed a worker's compensation claim.

## **RACE/COLOR**

Applicant's race; questions of applicant's color of skin, complexion, eyes, hair; etc.; Avoid all questions on Race/Ethnicity/National Origin

## **AGE**

Date of birth; Age; Date of high school, college graduation.

## **MILITARY EXPERIENCE**

Dates and condition of discharge; applicant's military experience in other than U.S. armed services.

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## Examples of questions NOT to ask

- How old are you?  
When were you born?
- When did you graduate  
from \_\_\_\_\_?
- Where did you graduate from?
- What is your sexual  
orientation?
- Do you have/plan to  
have children?
- Who will take care of your  
children while you're at work?
- Is English your first language?
- Are you a U.S. citizen?
- What country are you from?
- Where were you/your  
parents born?
- What is your religion?
- Where do you go to church?
- What clubs or social organ-  
izations do you belong to?
- Do you have any disabilities?
- How is your health?
- Have you ever been arrested?  
Avoid any questions re
- If you were in the military.  
Were you honorably  
discharged?
- Do you own your home?

## CONVICTIONS AND ARRESTS

Prior arrests.

## PREGNANCY

If applicant is pregnant; plans to have children.

## GENDER IDENTITY

Whether applicant prefers to be addressed as Mr.; Mrs; Miss; Ms.;  
Avoid all questions relating to gender and sexual orientation

## GENETICS

Questions about genetic tests of applicants or his or her family  
members; questions about family medical history.

## ADDRESS

Do you own your own home, or do you rent? Who do you live with?  
How are you related to the people you live with?

## AVAILABILITY

Directly asking about weekend work could be seen as a proxy  
question for religious observance. Also, questions about evening  
work or childcare arrangements can impact females who have  
childcare responsibilities. Asking if they own a car could be seen  
as racially discriminatory unless it is a requirement of the job.

## EMERGENCY CONTACT

Who is your emergency contact? Do not ask this as part of any  
pre-employment interview questions as this could be seen as a  
question about national origin or sexual orientation.

## FINANCIAL STATUS

Do you own your home? Do you own a car? Due to the relationship  
between poverty and underserved communities, questions on this  
subject can be very sensitive.

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