

# Memo: Interview Guidelines

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Use these guidelines interviewing candidates for the Marketing Manager position.

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## Incoming concerns:

- *"How can I identify if a candidate has made damaging anonymous posts about us on social media?"*  
**See:** [II A](#) and [III](#).
- *"How can I determine if this candidate will have a poised public presence and redeem our company image?"*  
**See:** [II B](#) and [III](#).
- *"How can I contain further legal liabilities related to harassment regarding this hire?"*  
**See:** All of [II](#).

## Successful First Steps:

- **Introduce yourself with your gender pronouns.** This sets the right tone for our fresh steps forward as a company and we saw the benefits in our bias training.
- **Be patient with technology and background noises.** This pandemic is challenging and we can't get the best sense of a candidate if we make them feel frazzled. If you're having trouble hearing the candidate due to connectivity or static issues, let them know and *explicitly* tell them they can take their time to find a new place to speak, try a new device, or, worst case, we can reschedule.

- **We can best evaluate every candidate if they feel they are showing us themselves at their very best.** Both parties benefit from this experience. Using praise of accomplishments or answers can help a candidate open up and we can learn more about them to see if this is the right fit.
- **Keep interview questions as consistent from candidate to candidate as possible** to make the evaluation objective and thorough. It's less work for you!

## **Objective:** Evaluate the Candidate's Qualifications for the Role

**Use the job description as a guide for framing your questions.** We are not just looking for a fresh start in the wake of a dismissal related to culture. We are choosing the future of our company's Marketing department functionally *and* culturally.

This candidate is taking on a high-profile, high-cost campaign that is now stalled, costing us more. **We need to know how they can carry it over the finish line, what they would need.**

Examples:

- "What steps will you take to determine what this campaign needs and how to get it on track?"
- "Tell me about your experience managing projects for launch to a massive audience."
- "You would be taking on a high profile project that is behind schedule. How would you handle a high pressure situation like that and what would you need to succeed?"

Since this campaign has not launched yet, the candidate has signed an NDA for any proprietary information shared during the interview process. It's okay to discuss the details of the campaign.

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## Interview Guidelines Specifically Related to the Situation Our Former Marketing Manager Has Created

An inextricable factor to this candidate search is our public image in the wake of blogs and a widely publicized lawsuit from a former employee. **Candidates for this position should be prepared to handle the fallout from this scandal.**

Our lawsuit is a matter of public record, so some information is publicly available, and some is not. **Refer to materials from our company lawyer on appropriate language** for referencing the suit and any related incidents. This will help you summarize the situation in an interview neutrally regarding what has happened and the steps we have taken, including bias training and hiring an equity initiative project manager.

**Make sure the candidates know we take any concerns about our culture seriously** and we want to ensure that everyone feels comfortable and heard when they come to work. We acknowledge our role in actively supporting the healing process from this incident. Tell them we know we as a company perform our best when we adhere to these values. We hold ourselves accountable if we are not upholding our culture goals, just as we would for falling short of any other essential business needs. Briefly explain the related policies they can expect us to enforce regarding harassment, relation, and reporting if we hire them.

**Objective:** Determine If This Person is Aware of the Situation

Hopefully, the candidate will have done their research on our company, but regardless we need to get an understanding of what they already know to **prepare them for questions related to this topic**, and we should know if they have any connections we may be unaware of.

Examples:

- “We have recently become involved in a public lawsuit regarding sexual harassment allegations against the employee who formerly had this position. I can give you the relevant background information and how it relates to this position, but first: Are you already aware of this?”
- “Because this will likely come up if we make an offer, can you tell us if you know either of the people involved in the suit or if you have worked with the person who formerly held this position before?”

If they are not aware, make them aware, per our lawyer’s provided language. If they have connections to either person in the lawsuit, thank them for their transparency. You can ask clarifying questions strictly to understand who they are referring to, when they worked with this person, or the extent of their relationship with our former marketing manager (not the victim). Do not make any other comment on their answer besides our gratitude for their transparency.

**Objective:** Assess Candidate’s Public-Facing Strategy in the Wake of Our Former Marketing Manager’s Dismissal

**Before asking related questions**, make the candidate aware we’re looking for someone who can be comfortable with the “heat” we are currently experiencing and handle the public-facing healing process.

Examples:

- “Have you ever had to handle a reputational issue for a company publicly before?”
- “What steps will you take to handle the public fallout of this situation?”

Since we also want someone with presentational or PR skills who can masterfully handle livestream news interviews regarding this sensitive topic, it’s perfectly appropriate to ask for a clip (post-interview) if they have appeared professionally on a podcast or video interview. You could alternatively suggest the next round job interview be on camera to see if they answer

questions with poise, or to ask that the next round demo a brief webinar on any topic of the candidate's choosing.

## **Objective:** Assess Candidate's Internal Strategy to Heal and Prevent Future Internal Harassment Issues

**Before asking related questions,** make the candidate aware that while HR is helming internal fallout from the situation our former marketing manager created, any leader stepping into this role also has a responsibility to repair and lead a healthy culture.

Examples:

- “Have you ever been the subject of a behavioral complaint and if so, what did you do to resolve the situation?”
- “As a leader, how do you plan on moving your team forward from the situation?”
- “What do you think makes subordinates feel the most comfortable at work, and where do you see your role in that as a leader?”

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## **Common Pitfalls to Avoid**

### **Ask about professional social media or blogging relevant to the position, not personal social media. Make this distinction clear.**

Even if the candidate mentions blogging as a personal interest on their resume, we're only interested in blogging if it's strictly relevant to the role. In this case, the role is Marketing, and so we are interested in any professional pieces to see how this person presents their expertise or crafts a public-facing piece. Asking about personal blogging risks us being exposed to protected class information, such as religious affiliation, and though this has nothing to do with our assessment of the candidate, we could be at risk of being accused of this factoring into our decision.

### **Let the reference check and background check serve their purposes.**

While we have legitimate concerns about liability and finding the right candidate who will treat employees with respect and do what's right for the company's reputation, we have to be aware of the human instinct to find closure and be aware of what is appropriate. It's understandable that we have anxiety about the identity of the anonymous blogger and whether the allegations are legitimate, or, conversely, that we may risk hiring someone who does not treat employees with respect. However, we should worry about a candidate feeling *interrogated* during an interview. Stay within these guidelines as much as possible and know that, if we make an offer, our background check and reference check will also help us feel secure in knowing we attempted to non-invasively determine that an employee has a history of inappropriate workplace behavior.

**Share what we're looking for, not what we're *not* looking for.**

We're looking for someone well-spoken, put-together, looks professional on camera, and conducts themselves with poise even under pressure. Describing a public image that would *not* be ideal, such as someone who comes off untrustworthy, can be misinterpreted by a candidate as bias, such as against their ethnic or racial background. Additionally, when describing what we're looking for, stick to ideal *behavior and composure* (well-spoken, confident) rather than an ideal physical appearance (pretty).

**Do not ask about the client's ethnic background and be sensitive to micro-aggressions related to this topic.**

We don't want to assume based on a candidate's appearance or last name that they are personally familiar with urban Spanish-speaking populations in places like Miami and Los Angeles, nor do we want the candidate to feel singled out, even tokenized or objectified for their background. Instead, just ask what approaches they have previously employed to reach a non-English-speaking audience, or ask what research they think would be effective to find out how to best reach our targeted demographic. Stick to asking about *professional* experiences or how they would go about identifying the best strategy for the goals of this campaign.

**We don't want candidates to infer we'd prefer to hire a woman.**

This may seem counter-intuitive because the intentions *are* good, but we do not want to appear to give gender priority over qualifications and experience. This is in the best interests both for the candidates we choose and those we do not. We must also be mindful, per our bias training, that any non-gender-conforming or transgender candidates may or may not feel comfortable with this statement or expectations. We, regardless, need a candidate with stellar qualifications and relevant experience.