



*Personalized recruitment for nurse executives and hospital leaders since 1989*

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## Candidate Preparation – Interview Questions to Ask

The interview is your opportunity to learn about the new organization and have them learn about you. The way in which you conduct yourself and relate to others, your demonstration of knowledge, and your ability to communicate effectively are all key measurements that will be evaluated during the interview.

Your ability to ask insightful and pertinent questions during the interview process will enable you to:

- Evaluate the match between the needs and goals of the organization and your own,
- Enhance your ability to make an accurate and informed decision about accepting the position,
- Understand the potential and path for upward mobility in the organization,
- Identify political issues and assess the amount of "risk" involved, and
- Your ability to successfully execute your responsibilities, should you be offered and accept the position.

Here are some examples of questions you should ask during the interview process:

- Why is this position open? How often has it been filled in the past five to ten years?
- What has been the primary reason for people leaving this role?

- Why did the last person leave?
- In what ways were you pleased with what the last person accomplished?
- Where was the greatest need for improvement of the last person in this position?
- What would you like done differently by the next person that fills the position?
- What are some of the objectives you would like to have completed?
- What is your most pressing objectives? What would you like to have done within the next three months? . . . six months? . . . one to two years?"
- What are some of the longer term objectives you would like to complete?
- Describe your quality and performance improvement methodologies.
- Describe changes you anticipate from healthcare reform initiatives. How far along in the journey are you?
- Are there any staff mix or staffing ratio issues? How have they changed in the past year? What changes do you foresee?
- What retention programs are in place or planned?
- What has been the greatest financial

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- impact on this facility in the past year? What is anticipated in the coming year?
- What freedom would I have in determining my objectives, deadlines and methods of measurement?
  - What kind of support does this position receive in the terms of people, finances or education?
  - What are some of the more difficult problems that one would face in this position? How do you think these could best be handled?
  - In terms of status, prestige and influence, how does this department compare with others, especially from the viewpoint of the top person?
  - How are inter-departmental relationships encouraged? . . . disagreements handled?
  - What is the relationship between the physicians and administration? . . . nursing? . . . ancillary services?
  - How would you describe your management style?
  - How long have you been with this organization? Why did you decide to join?
  - What personality traits do you consider critical for this position?
  - What do you see as my strengths, shortcomings and chances for this position?
  - Where could a person advance if successful in this position and within what time frame?
  - In what services has this organization been most successful over the years, particularly more recently? Are new markets/services being developed? If so, what are they?
- What significant changes do you foresee in the near future? Expansion plans? Reorganization?
  - What significant changes have happened recently? What was the impact on this department?
  - Have any new management philosophies been recently introduced into the organization? How have they impacted leadership goals and objectives?
  - Are you on a journey to Magnet or Center of Excellence status?
  - What construction or remodeling projects have recently been completed? What is coming up in the next 6-12 months?
  - Are there plans for mergers or acquisitions?
  - What is the corporate mission statement?
  - What formal and informal benchmarks will you use to measure my effectiveness and my contributions?
  - What educational opportunities are available for my staff? . . . my leadership team . . . myself?
  - How does the reporting relationship work? What are the acceptable channels of communication?
  - Is there any reason why I would not be considered for this position?
  - Do I have the job?
  - At my performance review in 12 months, what will I have accomplished that will exceed your expectations?

### Questions to Avoid

Avoid asking questions that would indicate that you are more concerned about yourself than

the organization. Primary among these questions is, "What will be my salary and benefits package?" This question in particular, creates too much pressure for everyone involved in the interview process and may create an adversarial atmosphere. More often than not, the person being asked does not have the answer at the time of the question.

In our experience, questions of compensation are best handled by the recruiter. We have successfully negotiating hundreds of compensation packages that have resulted in financial advancement for candidates while helping organizations control their expenses.

#### **On the Spot Offers**

On occasion, an offer is given at the end of the interview. How exciting! If you know you want the job and the compensation is acceptable then accept the offer as enthusiastically as it was offered.

If you need time to consider, if you are uncertain that the compensation is sufficient, thank them with enthusiasm and advise them you need to speak with family/friends first but will have an answer with a specified time period.



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