

# *Interviewing Testers*

*Selecting the Best People for your Team*



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## *Interviewing Testers*

- ❖ You probably don't want to hire vampires, but sometimes we do hire...
  - ❑ Process cops
  - ❑ Quality cops
  - ❑ People without proper skills
  - ❑ People with troubling personalities
  - ❑ Other forms of bad hires
- ❖ How can you avoid making these mistakes?
- ❖ Let's look at, and practice, some ideas...



# *Hiring Process*

- Surround yourself with a smart team
- A critical management decision: hire the right people
- How?
  - Define a good process for evaluating and hiring
  - Clearly define the position
  - Understand the necessary skills
  - Work with others to carry out effective interviews
  - Sort candidates from least qualified to best qualified
- Carrying out this process involves a number of activities, which we'll describe here



# *Job Description*

- The start of a good hiring process is to know who you're looking for
  - Tasks and responsibilities
  - Experience required
  - Specific skills required
  - Additional skills desired
  - Salary
  - Training, education, certification, security clearances, or licenses required
  - Other relevant details (e.g., work hours, dress code, perks, travel, career path)
- Your HR department might have a template and guidelines
- Good and bad examples of job descriptions can be found online



# *Evaluating Candidates Based on Resumes*

- Once job description is posted, you'll get resumes
- You should filter these to eliminate unqualified candidates, based on:
  - Required skills and experience
  - Required education and certifications (and make sure they can prove it)
  - Salary history and requirements
  - Organization and other written communication skills
  - Spelling or grammar errors (often a blackball)
- Remember to distinguish between required and desired attributes



## *Attributes of Good Interview*

- Multiple rounds
  - Multiple people should be involved
  - Various opinions should be considered
- Mixed interview team
  - People at different levels in the organization
  - Testing stakeholders
- Efficient interview process
  - Clear set of steps
  - Each step removes unsuitable candidates
  - Final candidates are the best fit
- Let's look at examples of interview questions and styles, and why they work



## *Evaluating Attitude*

- ❖ “What do you enjoy about working as a tester?”
- ❖ Right attitude for job and organization
- ❖ Good fit for the group
- ❖ Effective in the job
- ❖ Take testing seriously
- ❖ Maintain a positive attitude (even in tough schedules)



## *Evaluating Presentation*

- ✚ “For a recent bug report that you had to discuss with others, what information did you include and how did you explain it?”
- ✚ Confident and knowledgeable (but not arrogant)
- ✚ Stands up for their work
- ✚ Able to admit mistakes
- ✚ Handles situations in a mature fashion
- ✚ Can represent the test team





## *Evaluating Organization*

- ❖ “How do you decide how much time to spend on a task, how do you track your tasks, and how to you handle interruptions?”
- ❖ Organizational skills
- ❖ Able to be productive when frequently interrupted
- ❖ Able to return to interrupted tasks
- ❖ Can resume a test after finding and reporting a defect



## *Evaluating Interpersonal Skills*

- ⊕ “Explain how you handled the situation the last time your test results caused controversy on a project”
- ⊕ Sufficient maturity
- ⊕ Leadership potential
- ⊕ Can deal with interpersonal issues
- ⊕ Empathetic
- ⊕ Can critique work products without offending
- ⊕ Sees both sides of an argument



## *Behavioral Questions*

- Ask about how candidates have behaved in past
- Ex: “Tell me how you handled a situation where you found what you felt was an important bug, but which others felt was trivial”
- Pros: Can give you a good feel for what it will be like to work with someone
- Cons: A clever raconteur can sometimes outfox you, so be sure to drive the discussion
- My take: An essential part of the interview process to avoid dreadful hiring mistakes



## *Practice 1*

- ❖ Trade resumes with a person next to you
- ❖ Briefly read each other's resume (<5 minutes)
- ❖ Ask each other a behavioral question (3 minutes maximum for answer)
- ❖ Discuss with the other attendees



## *Situational Questions*

- Give the candidate a real example of a project situation, and ask what they'd do
- Ex: "We have a challenge with determining how best to document our tests, given the varying skills of our testers. How would you handle that?"
- Pros: Helps you evaluate how effective the person will be in your test group
- Cons: Watch carefully for the glib-tongued interviewee
- My take: Useful as part of a larger set of questions



## *Practice 2*

- ⊕ Working with the same partner as before
- ⊕ Ask each other a situational question (3 minutes maximum for answer)
- ⊕ Discuss with the other attendees



# *Technical Questions*

- Detailed questions about test design techniques, coding, scripting, or other technical skills
- Ex: “Here’s a state-diagram that shows how device wiping works for a mobile phone. What would you test? Why is that sufficient?”
- Pros: Allows you to explore whether the person has the technical qualifications for the job
- Cons:
  - Possible over-focus on “book learning” over practical application
  - Weeding out candidates based on irrelevant technical questions skills given the role
- My take:
  - Essential types of questions
  - Must be asked by someone with more technical skill than the candidate



## *Practice 3*

- ❖ Working with the same partner as before
- ❖ Ask each other a technical question appropriate to their skills and experience (3 minutes maximum for answer)
- ❖ Discuss with the other attendees





# *Puzzle Questions*

- Presenting a brainteaser puzzle to evaluate problem-solving skills
- Pros: Some like these as a way to assess critical thinking skills and creativity
- Ex: “Why are manhole covers round?”
- Cons:
  - Some flub under interview pressure
  - Over-emphasis on IQ rather than practical abilities (stupid is as stupid does)
- My take:
  - Often no connection between these puzzles and daily work
  - Plenty of geniuses can be a real pain in the butt to work with
  - I don't use these questions at all



# *Exams*

- Check technical knowledge, organization, ability to structure a problem
- Pros: A valid exam provides a consistent, fair evaluation of candidate skills
- Cons: If the exam is invalid, irrelevant to daily work, not approved by HR, or asks illegal questions, it could create significant problems
- My take:
  - The ISTQB exams fairly, objectively measure certain types of knowledge
  - Why not use something similar as part of your process?



## *Audition Interviews*

- These give you a chance to see someone actually do their daily work
- Examples include:
  - Have the candidate run a typical, existing test and log defects
  - Have the candidate create tests to adequately cover important test conditions
  - Have the candidate create tests from an actual requirements specification or user story
  - Have the candidate present a topic to the test team
- These are only examples; you can pick any typical task



## *Practice 4*

- ➊ Working with the same partner as before
- ➋ Work separately to create tests for the user story / requirement shown on the next slide (5 minutes maximum for answer)
- ➌ Evaluate each other's tests
- ➍ Discuss with the other attendees



## *Practice User Story/ Requirement*

- ❖ Consider the following user story/ requirement:

As a customer, I want be able to enter a user name and password to login to my account, so that I can re-use my shipping, billing, and payment information from previous purchases.

- ❖ Develop a set of tests to cover this story
- ❖ Evaluate
- ❖ Discuss



## *What to Watch for During the Interview*

- Good problem-solving skills for typical testing problems
- Critical thinking skills, including the ability to explain their thinking
- Good written and verbal communication skills
- Teamwork skills (avoid disruptors of morale and cohesion)
- Balanced curiosity, especially about software anomalies
- Sufficient technical and business domain knowledge
- Appropriate testing skills for the position
- Appropriate experience and background



## *Conclusions*

- ❖ Hiring is one of the most important tasks a manager does
- ❖ It's easy to make mistakes in the process, which causes long-term grief
- ❖ Use a good process, good interview questions, good interview types, and close attention to avoid mistakes
- ❖ You'll be rewarded with a high-performing team



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