The New Frontier of Hiring Just-in-Time and Virtual Talent

By Paul Falcone

Interviewing and Evaluating Freelancers and Remote Workers: This is the second in a two-series contribution to the *EHRN Newsletter* from the new 3rd edition of Paul's bestselling book, *96 Great Interview Questions to Ask Before You Hire* (AMACOM Books / Harper Collins, 2018).

Part II: Freelancers—How to Measure and Manage the Unseen

When hiring for a remote role, the requisite skills, knowledge, and experience aren't enough. The general nature of working with a distributed workforce makes hiring and managing more complex, requiring different sets of leadership skills and worker attributes. Technology is driving this change in workplace flexibility and arming yourself with sets of questions that best ferret out individuals who can thrive in this unique working relationship is critical.

1. If Candidates Have Prior Remote Working Experience (preferred)

Why do you like to work remotely, and what does a successful remote working relationship look and feel like in your experience?

Share with me what the specific working expectations were for the prior positions where you've worked remotely.

Paint a picture for me of your working environment at home in terms of your office or workspace where you provide customer service.

I've always found that the best remote team members are self-starters who are able to motivate themselves and work independently. How close is that to describing you? Can you give me an example of how you typically motivate yourself to feel engaged about your work?

In your experience, is it more difficult to feel engaged if you're remote? If so, how have you successfully overcome that?

As a remote [customer service specialist], how have you demonstrated creativity and innovation in terms of customizing solutions for clients with special needs?

If you accept this job and you're successful in it one year from now, what will that success look and feel like?

2. If Candidates Have No Prior Remote Working Experience (not preferred / riskier)

Having not worked remotely before, what are some of the advantages and disadvantages that you suspect may be at play in terms of a long-distance working relationship?

What interests you most about the possibility of working remotely?

What are your biggest concerns about not being co-located with your boss and peers?

Without getting too specific or providing me with concrete examples, are you concerned about any particular distractions at home that may impact your ability to hold longer conversations with customers or remain engaged on the line for uninterrupted periods of 20 minutes or more?

Tell me about your ability to put work aside at the end of the workday when it is so close by. Do you suspect that you'll have any challenges in disengaging or disconnecting from your work when it's so accessible and right at your fingertips?

Many people don't have the organization, focus, or motivation to be productive working remotely, and successfully working from home is a skill that takes time and commitment. How do you see yourself succeeding in this if you've never done it before?

What do you think it takes to deliver A-level performance on a consistent basis when you're working remotely?

We care more about customer loyalty than we do about customer satisfaction here at XYZ Company. How does customer loyalty show itself when the entire working relationship is by phone, email, texting, or occasionally video chats?

3. Establishing a Rhythm and Cadence of Feedback and Communication

Share with me how you've maintained a sense of community and connectedness through virtual and in-person meetings and get-togethers at your prior companies.

How do you go about establishing relationships and communication hubs with your peers to keep from feeling alienated or disconnected from the group?

Some leaders worry about being effective in a virtual environment because if they can't physically oversee what's happening, they can't know that work is getting done. How could you allay that concern that many managers have when it comes to hiring remote employees?

How do you ensure that you never leave your manager "flying blind" when it comes to important customer updates or changes in plan?

How often would you prefer to have feedback with me when it comes to updating me about your work? In other words, what's the right amount of structure, direction, and feedback that you prefer from your supervisors regarding your workload?

If you believe that communication and accountability go hand-in-hand, how would you structure your communications with me to ensure that I feel confident in your work and in your meeting and exceeding expectations?

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