



INTRODUCTION TO PEER INTERVIEWING



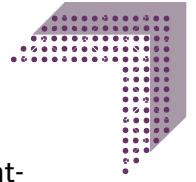
By the year 2030, the aging services sector will need 3.5 million additional direct care workers — a frightening projection considering 99% of skilled nursing facilities and 96% of assisted livings across the country already indicate that they are short of staff. Because of this challenging labor market, 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).

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.



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.

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
