Mastering Remote Recruitment:

The GUIDE *to* EFFECTIVE REMOTE INTERVIEWS

TALENT WANTED

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WHY YOU WILL READ *this* EBOOK

Workplaces in today's businesses are changing, thanks to remote work. The capabilities offered by virtual and remote workers bring incredible possibilities that companies are just learning to utilize.

Though you may feel confident in your skills at evaluating new local workers for your business, the interview and evaluation process for new remote workers provides challenges that you have not previously faced. This ebook walks you through an interview and evaluation process that can be used to find the perfect remote assistant for your company—particularly for applicants in another country. This ebook is filled with examples, strategies, and processes to find competent remote workers to meet your needs.

As a lawyer looking to hire international, multilingual assistants for my firm, I struggled to find proficient English-speakers who could seamlessly integrate with my team despite the challenges of remote work. Language barriers and differing time zones became daily hurdles. Motivated to overcome these challenges, I meticulously developed an approach to interviewingand evaluating international applicants. After finding a successful strategy, we launched Regents Remote Services, dedicated to connecting businesses with these exceptional professionals. Now, we take pride in facilitating smooth, international hiring that powers companies' ongoing success.

Jason Melton, Esq.
Co-founder,
Regents Remote Services

THE ART *of the* INTERVIEW PROCESS

> During the interview process, it is not just the applicant that has reason to be stressed.

We all understand that finding a new employee can be a challenge. While nerve-wracking for the applicant, the process also brings plenty for the interviewer to worry about. Evaluating skills is just one part of the equation—and even that is not easy. The employer also needs to determine if the applicant would be a good cultural fit for the business. Will the applicant be reliable? Will they mess with team dynamics? And all of that doesn't even take into account how onboarding a new employee will impact budget and disrupt the current schedules, deadlines, and plans.

Through this morass of worries, companies tend to find their footing and eventually settle into a reliable pattern and method for applicant evaluation. Managers and owners become experts at evaluating new hires. Over time, finding new employees can become less painful as the art of interviewing and selection becomes more familiar.

However, workplaces in the modern world are changing. The technology and capabilities can now connect companies with virtual and remote workers from diverse locations. More and more organizations are learning of the versatility and potential that virtual assistants can provide. With many American and Canadian cities facing labor shortages, this has opened the doors to a myriad of possibilities for organizations looking to expand their capabilities and scope.

International, remote virtual assistants can bring a number of benefits that companies may find enticing:

- **COST EFFICIENCY**
  Remote workers, particularly in many other countries, have lower overhead costs due to reduced salaries and operational expenses.

- **EXTENDED WORK HOURS**
  Depending on the services digital assistants are expected to provide, companies may gain the ability to offer services across different time zones.

- **ACCESS TO DIVERSE TALENT POOL**
  Recruitment from a more diverse geography brings with it a global pool of specialized skills and educational backgrounds.

- **MULTILINGUAL SUPPORT**
  Virtual assistants from other countries may bring fluency in multiple languages, which can help a business service a broader client base.

EXPANDING *the* INTERVIEW SKILLSET

Many hiring practices that worked for in-person interviews and in-office employees will not stand up to the needs of a remote, virtual hiring process. This may leave companies feeling like they are left in the lurch, but luckily, hiring remote virtual assistants is already an established practice across industries. There are many lessons and best practices that can be learned from others' experiences.

To illustrate some of these best practices, we will walk through the interviewing process and focus on these foundational themes:

HONESTY AND TRUST
Remote workers must adhere to ethical practices such as maintaining client confidentiality without direct supervision.

COMMUNICATION
Remote workers must understand expectations and collaborate effectively, all while remaining responsive and professional.

WORKING ENVIRONMENT
A good working environment is essential for maintaining focus and performance.

ENGLISH PROFICIENCY
Clear communication in English is vital for client work.

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BEFORE *the* INTERVIEW

It's not about industry experience!

When preparing to interview remote applicants, try to get a clear understanding of their communication skills ahead of time. Look for candidates with a work history demonstrating the ability to effectively exchange information, regardless of the field. Whether they have been a lifeguard, a telephone operator, or managed customer relations, the vital element is their experience in conveying messages clearly and efficiently. Proficiency in English is clearly also important, but you will be unable to truly evaluate their level of fluency before the interview.

> Remember that experience relevant to your business, while beneficial, is not a prerequisite for success in a remote role.

The real challenge lies in instructing and setting expectations for someone who is not physically present. The applicant's ability to be taught is key. This is why you should try to select individuals who are adaptable and teachable.

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The INITIAL INTERVIEW

Language proficiency and trustworthiness

There are two primary goals in the initial interview. The first is to determine the applicant's level of English proficiency, and the second is to evaluate how trustworthy the applicant may be.

Communication is so important to an employer's relationship with a remote employee that the only way to truly achieve the level of communication needed is to aim for over-communication. If it ever seems as if too much communication is going on, it probably still isn't enough. During the interview, take note of the candidate's comfort with asking clarifying questions when needed. This is a crucial aspect of effective virtual communication.

Be alert to cultural variations in communication, particularly in the ways candidates might indirectly express agreement or disagreement. In some cultures, it may not be acceptable to outright answer "no" to a question. Understanding these nuances is essential to prevent misunderstandings in a remote work setting.

It helps if the candidate knows American culture or has been to the United States. This can make communication and work processes easier. Ask if they have any personal connection with the United States, particularly if those connections include traveling here regularly. This might show they can handle U.S. business styles and language better.

Evaluating the Candidate's Working Environment

Communication isn't the only thing you should be worried about during the initial interview. Applicants with a good physical workspace should percolate to the top of your list. Do they have a home office? If so, who else will be present in the home? Will there be distractions from family members or pets? In some cultures, the typical household size can be much larger, which can lead to many interruptions during a work day.

If they will be traveling to an office to work, an important consideration is their commute time. In cities across Latin America and Asia, heavy traffic is common and well beyond what you may expect. Rush hour and congestion can dwarf even the worst of American cities. Talk candidly about their commute and decide how many hours per day their commute should take. If traffic makes their commute unreasonable, they are probably not right for the job.

Commute Times in Major Cities

Commute times for remote workers might not seem significant at first, but congestion and traffic in foreign metropolises can surprise Americans.

The average commute time in Mumbai is over an hour, and a commuter in that city spends an average of 11 days per year stuck in traffic.

A 10km (6 mile) commute in Mexico City can take an average of 33 minutes.

A similar commute in Buenos Aires takes about 30 minutes.

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Tips for Evaluating English Proficiency

An excellent start to evaluating an applicant's English proficiency is to engage in conversation about topics familiar to them. For example, ask about their current role or previous employment. It's not the content of their response that's of primary interest, but their ability to express themselves in English. This allows candidates to focus less on what they're saying and more on the language they're using. You are providing a comfortable space for them to display their proficiency level without the added pressure of discussing new themes.

Both frequency of English use and context are key indicators of an applicant's language proficiency. If an applicant uses English mainly in school but not in their job or daily life, it is often a strong indicator that they have a solid grasp of the language and a personal investment in their language skills. Such candidates often demonstrate a high degree of intelligence and capacity for growth. This can suggest a promising potential for mastering the level of communication remote work demands.

If an applicant uses English daily, no matter the context, you are likely hearing them at their best during the initial interview. This can help you evaluate their maximum proficiency level and will give you some idea of the consistency of their language use. In any case, **look for honesty in their explanation of English use and proficiency; this is an excellent way to evaluate trustworthiness.**

Assigning a Task

If you feel like the candidate is a good prospect for a second interview, ask them to complete a small writing task and schedule a second interview to discuss it. This task can range from drafting a 300-word essay on a given topic to writing a personal yet professional thank-you letter for the interview. Providing a writing task helps gauge the applicant's versatility with written English.

The topics for these tasks can vary. For example, a law firm may assign a writing task covering a legal topic, like subject matter jurisdiction or an overview of Georgia's laws on damages and trials. For an applicant with a background relevant to the company, you might pose an industry-specific problem that requires a researched response.

This assignment is designed to assess not only their research capabilities but also their honesty and English proficiency. The focus is not on finding the perfect answer, but on the method and language used to arrive at their conclusion. In the second interview, you will be discussing the methods and tools they used to complete the assignment.

Example Writing Tasks

Looking for some example writing tasks to assign your applicants? Use this list as inspiration.

- Write you a "Thank You" letter for the interview. Provide specific rules for the letter, such as topics to discuss, topics not to discuss, length and word limits.

- Compose a response to a letter regarding a technical question relevant to your industry.

- Write a response to a client explaining the steps to complete a technical task.

- For legal assistants, write a short piece on subject matter jurisdiction and a famous case on the topic

- Describe in their own words a technical aspect of their job, such as a specific algorithm for software developers, or a legal procedure for paralegals.
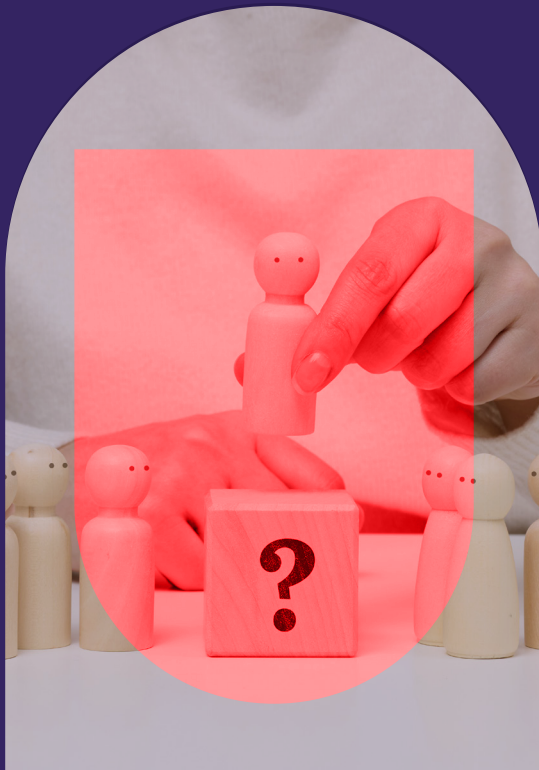
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> The second interview is your opportunity to observe how clearly they can express themselves and how deeply their English comprehension goes.

The SECOND INTERVIEW

The second interview is when the candidate's English skills will be at their best. They will be more relaxed and hopefully speaking more naturally. This is your opportunity to observe how clearly they can express themselves and how deeply their English comprehension goes.

The primary topic of the second interview should be the assigned writing task. Discuss how they worked on the assignment, focusing on the specifics of their process. It is important to ask about the resources they used—did they utilize generative AI or tools like Grammarly to aid their writing? Utilizing such tools is perfectly acceptable; however, candidness in disclosing the use of such aids will inform you about their integrity and trustworthiness.

Discovering and discussing their process also provides more insight into their problem-solving skills, their ability to use English independently, and their suitability for remote work. **This process reveals not only their writing ability, but also their approach to work and their honesty about their language skills.**

DUE DILIGENCE

When hiring remote assistants, there are several additional steps that are of critical importance. Conducting a thorough background check should be considered a required part of the interviewing process. In addition, the candidate's resume deserves careful scrutiny. There should be a meticulous examination of professional experiences, educational background, and any other claims made by the applicant.

Performing this level of scrutiny across international boundaries can prove particularly challenging, which is one of the reasons that a staffing agency can bring such enormous benefit to the remote international assistant hiring process. Agencies, such as Regents Remote Services, become proficient in conducting comprehensive background checks. It is one way that we save our clients time, resources, and worry. In addition, Regents carries insurance to protect their clients from a lot of the concerns that people may have about overseas virtual workers.

In addition, an agency can provide the expertise to quickly identify the most suitable candidates based on any hiring criteria provided by your organization. They can be equipped to handle the nuances of verifying credentials across different regions and countries. An agency should have systems in place to address any discrepancies or concerns that arise during the vetting process.

This attention to due diligence helps mitigate the risks of hiring remotely. While an applicant's skills and language prowess are certainly important, ensuring that they are also credible and trustworthy is what ultimately builds the integrity and effectiveness of your team. By thoroughly checking backgrounds and leveraging the services of a specialized agency, your company can build a reliable team of remote assistants with confidence.

MAKING YOUR FINAL DECISION

Recruiting remote assistants for your business deserves a careful consideration of the themes we have covered in this paper. Honesty and trust in a candidate form the foundation of a reliable and transparent working relationship. Effective communication—in fact, over-communication— is required for managing the complexities and intricacies of remote collaboration. We also emphasize the working environment and location, including factors like traffic and cultural differences. English proficiency is of course a non-negotiable skill, crucial for work in a predominantly English-speaking context.

Keeping these themes in mind throughout the interview process will go a long way toward helping you select the most suitable remote assistants. However, making the pivot toward hiring remote workers from different nations can be daunting. Bringing in a staffing agency with experience in international hiring practices for your industry can go a long way toward creating a robust process that inspires confidence in your new remote assistant.

About Regents Remote Services

Regents Remote Services has focused on providing top-tier bilingual virtual assistance to companies since 2009. By connecting businesses to a diverse pool of talent, they have fine-tuned their recruitment process to identify skilled professionals in the following roles:

- Paralegals
- Legal and executive assistants
- Call center and intake staff
- Marketing and public relations

- Software developers
- Accountants
- Physicians and physician assistants

Contact us today about your remote hiring needs.

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