

# Ask the Career Coach: Guide to Screening

What do you do when you're asked to screen job candidates?

By [Lisa Chenofsky Singer](#)

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Dear Career Coach Lisa,

Recently I have been asked to screen candidates for a client that I am consulting with. I do not know how to go about this. Can you guide me on how to approach this?

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Short Hills

There are legal requirements for compliance that come into play when interviewing. Ask your client if they will be handling these requirements or if you are expected to handle this aspect as well.

Assuming they are handling the compliance aspects, let's begin with the positions you are trying to fill. Have you been given a job posting or description of what is expected? If not, meet with the hiring manager and ask what they are ideally looking for. Ask what specific responsibilities are required for this position and what is nice to have. Ask what will make someone successful in this role. Ask who on their team is an ideal role model. Ask if there is any need to reshuffle any of their team members' current job responsibilities so they can help develop them or play further into someone's strengths. Ask if there is anyone within the company that may be considered before seeing outside candidates. These questions allow you to show your client your commitment to the overall success of their staff.

Based on the conversation above, create a one page summary that will serve you well when you begin to screen or interview candidates. From the summary and knowing the company's culture, you will have a good sense of what they are looking for in a qualified candidate.

Assuming they are providing you with the resumes received, create a list of consistent questions you will ask each and every candidate you speak with. You may deviate beyond the core questions but having a consistent approach will help you evaluate the candidates evenly. This core question list typically consists of four to six questions with additional questions focused on a specific topical matter. Ideally, the technical questions should come from the hiring manager unless they have asked you to do this.

Screening or interviewing candidates, whether it's a technical interview or screening for the right personality and cultural fit, is not as difficult when we know what questions we need to have answered. Preparation up front is the key to successfully screening candidates. Consider screening over the phone with 20 minute conversations. If the candidate is a good fit, you will probably schedule additional time with them or invite them to the office. Best wishes for a successful consulting engagement.

*"Ask the Career Coach" is a column dedicated to those who may be in transition or wrestling with a career dilemma by providing a forum for advice. We welcome your questions. Please send them to [CareerCoachLisa@gmail.com](mailto:CareerCoachLisa@gmail.com).*

*Lisa Chenofsky Singer is a Millburn-Short Hills resident and the founder of Chenofsky Singer & Associates LLC. She offers Executive and Career Management Coaching and Human Resources Consulting, writes and speaks on job search and career-related topics. Her web site is [www.ChenofskySinger.com](http://www.ChenofskySinger.com).*