

HELP DESK INTERVIEWS: 7 TIPS FOR INTERVIEWING AND HIRING HELP DESK PROFESSIONALS



The meeting of two personalities is like the contact of two chemical substances: if there is any reaction, both are transformed. — C.G. Jung

With help desk and service desk talent, a good hiring decision is one based on a formula that predicts good results. The service desk is a competitive, dynamic environment—and its people and their capabilities are what makes it successful (or not.) A primary challenge is finding and choosing the right people. When the hoped-for and needed capabilities haven't been defined from a strategic perspective, nor translated appropriately for the operational environment, hiring decisions often miss the mark...and we have all felt the pain when the chemical mix of personality and skill goes wrong!

Here's one way to think about this: The employment contract you offer a new employee is no less a service level agreement than the one you hold with your own customers. Your engagement in an employee's success directly impacts your customers, since he or she will interact directly with them. Being clear about competencies and desired outcome will help you choose the right candidate and, in turn, will help him or her make a positive contribution to the business.

What Goes Into the Mix

Here are some service desk and help desk interview tips that can help clarify your needs and properly communicate your expectations so you can consistently make excellent hiring decisions:

1. Examine the language that your organization uses when discussing help desk and service desk roles, along with what your customers say in satisfaction surveys

This can be a good way to assess competence which, it's fair to say, isn't defined in exactly the same way it was five years ago. Help desk and service desk competencies must continue to evolve and/or expand along with the services you provide and the changes those dictate in how you interact with customers.

2. Involve your current staff in writing recruitment ads and job descriptions to ensure they properly reflect the role and its continuing evolution

For instance, is this a [help desk or a service desk](#) role? Ask your employees to describe major challenges they face, as well as to contribute to a description of the ideal proactive competency mix. You want employees who can adapt and respond as your business demands and evolves. Too often, the failure of a new hire is related to incomplete or inaccurate communication about the expected competencies and behaviors.

3. Make sure the job descriptions and KPIs are clearly linked to the business vision, mission, and strategic and operational plans

Both employer and employee benefit from an investment in hiring and training. [The more successful your service desk is, the happier and more productive your organization.](#) For example, there is significant ROI in terms of productivity when you can avoid the high cost of performance problems with an employee after he or she goes beyond the legal probation period.

4. Adapt expectations and communications to where you've sourced your candidate

Hiring managers are faced with a choice: Pay premium rates for experienced professionals, or cast a wider net and invest in people with skills that translate into the function and provide the right level of nurture to help them grow professionally. It's easier to assess previous relationships, behavior, and adaptability for candidates who are internally sourced—though their potential can be negatively colored if, say, they outgrew a role or it wasn't suitable in the first place. However, hiring via an

agency brings in complete unknowns, making it more difficult for you to draw out the nature of the individual.

5. Communicate your needs consistently across all channels in your organization

Social media tools play an important role in recruiting, both in finding candidates and in creating and reinforcing the culture of the organization. Many employers now use techniques such as video, storytelling and game play as ways to test competency while also “selling” the role. It may be, however, that a more sophisticated and self-critical view of competencies is more helpful in encouraging candidates to opt out if it turns out the role is different from what they expected.

6. Use outside tools when appropriate

One tool I particularly like is called the Skills Framework for the Information Age (SFIA) because it helps to define an accurate competency profile and build a cross-organization skills matrix. The SFIA provides a valuable skills list and levels of competency in a globally recognized language for the ITSM industry and beyond. It is useful as a benchmark against which individuals can assess their fit with the required competencies for current and future roles. Additionally, it ensures you are assessing like candidates against the same criteria, avoiding any '[halo effect](#)' and minimizing personal perspectives that can negatively influence the recruiting decision.

7. Now, add the right attitude

The manner in which you conduct the recruitment and the benefits you offer are evidence of your organization's culture, politics, beliefs, and personality. It directly impacts candidates' sense of self-worth and how they see themselves fitting into your organization. If you do not show respect, dignity, honesty, and integrity with the candidate from the very beginning, then you cannot expect them to do the same.

To increase the likelihood of successful recruitment, it's smart to take an end-to-end view of knowledge mapping, skill assessment, and skill gap analysis. At all points it should:

- Support your organization's unique culture and values
- Provide candidates with a solid foundation for beginning this new relationship with you, the team, and the customers with whom they will interact
- Reduce their time to productivity without making them feel like it is “sink or swim”
- Keep your long-term staff comfortable with the 'new blood'

Recruiting should never be looked at as just a way to backfill a role. Instead, consider each new hire a powerful way to bring positive change to the current dynamic of a team so it moves into a new wave of productivity.

Additional Resources

[HDI Desktop Support Manager Recruitment Strategies](#)