

EXAMPLES OF WAYS TO HAVE CANDIDATES EXPLAIN GAPS IN EMPLOYMENT

1. APPLICATION FORMS WITH VOLUNTARY DISCLOSURE SECTIONS

Add a voluntary section on the application form where candidates can share any gaps in employment, along with context or explanations of what they have learned during the gap that have contributed to their readiness for this job. This allows candidates to address any gaps proactively, without feeling like they need to hide anything.

EXAMPLE SECTION:

"If you experienced any gaps in your employment, please feel free to share any relevant context or learnings that contribute to your readiness for this job. We value transparency and understand that everyone's career path is unique."

Why it matters:

This offers space for transparency and helps candidates feel empowered to provide context rather than letting assumptions be made about their background.

2. ONLINE OR IN-PERSON INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Ask interview questions that gently prompt candidates to explain employment gaps in a way that highlights their growth, learning, and current readiness for the role.

EXAMPLES OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

- "We understand that career paths often take unexpected turns. Can you share what you learned or gained during any periods of time when you were not in the workforce?"
- "There are some gaps in your employment history. Could you walk us through how that influenced your career or skills?"
- "We appreciate the different experiences people bring to the table. Were there any periods when you focused on personal or professional growth outside of a traditional job? We'd love to hear more."

Why it matters:

These questions show empathy and encourage open dialogue, helping interviewers assess a candidate's character, growth potential, and resilience, rather than just focusing on a gap.

3. OPPORTUNITY TO EXPLAIN THROUGH A BEHAVIORAL OR SITUATIONAL QUESTION

Sometimes gaps in employment may have allowed a candidate to develop important life skills. Use behavioral interview questions that encourage candidates to showcase how they've grown and learned during their time away from the workforce.

EXAMPLE BEHAVIORAL QUESTION:

- "Tell us about a time when you faced a challenging situation that required you to adapt or develop new skills. How did you overcome it, and what did you learn?"
- "Can you describe a situation where you had to build resilience or take on new responsibilities? How did this experience shape your approach to your work?"

Why it matters:

This gives the candidate an opportunity to frame their experience in a positive light, highlighting their growth and readiness for the job.

4. EMPOWERING CANDIDATES TO SHARE THEIR STORY

Create an opportunity for candidates to tell their story in a way that highlights their growth and readiness for the job. This could be in the form of a personal statement or video submission, depending on the company's resources and the candidate's comfort level.

EXAMPLE PROMPT:

- "We'd love to learn more about you beyond your resume. Please feel free to share any experiences or personal stories that have shaped who you are today, especially those that relate to your growth during times away from the workforce."

Why it matters:

This empowers the candidate to share their full journey, from challenges to success, and enables the employer to see the value in their perseverance.

5. ENSURE A FAIR EVALUATION PROCESS

Be sure that any explanations given about employment gaps are evaluated in a fair and consistent manner, ensuring that the candidate's qualifications, skills, and potential are the main focus.

EXAMPLE OF EVALUATION CONSIDERATION:

- "We value transparency and will review any explanations provided regarding employment gaps in the context of the candidate's qualifications, experience, and overall suitability for the role."

Why it matters:

This ensures that employment gaps do not unfairly disadvantage a candidate, allowing the evaluation process to focus on their skills, character, and potential fit for the role.

EXAMPLES OF QUESTIONS TO ASK ONCE AN OFFER IS READY AND A BACKGROUND CHECK REVEALS A CONVICTION

When the offer is ready to be extended, and a background check has revealed a conviction, the following questions can be asked to ensure a fair and transparent conversation about the candidate's past, while focusing on their growth and readiness for the role (especially when the nature of the conviction does not relate to the job and/or time has passed since the conviction).

1. Opportunity to Address the Conviction: "We noticed a conviction on your background check. Would you like to share anything further about your past and how it has influenced your path?"
2. Focus on Rehabilitation and Growth: "We understand that people learn and grow from their experiences. Could you share any steps you've taken or actions you've taken to move forward from that time in your life?"
3. Demonstrate How It Has Impacted Their Work Life: "In what ways has your past influenced the way you approach your work or interact with colleagues and clients?"
4. Reaffirm Your Commitment to Fair Treatment: "We believe in second chances and are focused on your current skills and qualifications for this role. Can you talk about how you are ready to contribute to our team?"

This approach creates a fair, empathetic environment for candidates to explain their background, offering them the chance to demonstrate growth, resilience, and readiness for the job. By focusing on the whole person and their current qualifications, you ensure a fair and inclusive hiring process.