

WESTGATE RESORTS
HIRING LEADER INTERVIEWING TOOLKIT



INTERVIEW
PREPARATION GUIDE

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Welcome to the Hiring Leader Interviewing Toolkit!

Westgate Resorts provides these resources to you to make the process of interviewing and selecting the best candidates for your team as easy as possible. The toolkit will help you to create a positive experience for all candidates who participate in an interview at Westgate, regardless of whether they are hired during the candidate search.

In the Hiring Leader Interviewing Toolkit, you will find the following resources:

- ❑ **Interview Preparation Guide** – This guide is designed to outline the steps you will take before the interview to create a positive candidate experience. We outline the hiring process, share how to effectively prepare for the interview, discuss resume review strategies, and provide important information about the questions you ask a candidate.
- ❑ **Interview Guides** – These guides, organized by business units, contain questions designed to determine a candidate’s competency for the role and their potential fit within the Westgate team. Each guide has a section for you to take notes alongside the questions to help you remember the candidate’s responses. Additionally, the guide contains probing questions to be asked when the candidate’s answer to a question doesn’t give you enough information to form an opinion.
- ❑ **Candidate Feedback and Consensus Rating Forms** – Upon interviewing each prospective candidate for a role, use this guide to rank the candidates’ responses side-by-side to determine which individual is the best addition to your team.
- ❑ **Position Specific Guides** – These guides contain questions tailored to specific team member roles within Westgate.

Review all the guides before you begin your next team member search to learn time saving information that will help you to avoid hiring pitfalls

Are you ready to hire? Let’s find out!

OVERVIEW AND PURPOSE OF THE INTERVIEW PREPARATION GUIDE

A Job-Seeker's Market

In the past couple of years, many employers in the hospitality industry have encountered a dramatic shift in hiring. Whereas in the past, employers like Westgate had many candidates to choose from and hiring leaders enjoyed the luxury of debating which candidate would be the best hire for days or weeks before making the job offer, the current hiring timeline has reduced significantly. A candidate who applied for a job on our website a week ago may now already have multiple job offers in play.

What does this mean for you as a hiring leader?

While it does change the way you approach hiring, it doesn't mean you need to lower your standards or hire an unqualified candidate. Instead, you need to act quickly, be transparent about what the role entails, and communicate why Westgate should be their new employer.

First and foremost, it is crucial that you approach hiring with the same amount of diligence as always, but with a much greater sense of urgency. Establish a game plan with your recruiter for vetting prospective candidates. If you'd like a weekly email update that contains vetted candidates, discuss your preference. We suggest reviewing resumes in groups of ten, as it gives you a better picture of what the current candidate pool looks like.

Whichever method you prefer, block time on your calendar to review the candidates as soon as possible, then communicate your shortlist back to the recruiter immediately. If you wait, you run the risk of losing candidates to other employers. When communicating with candidates, please use their preferred contact method.

Once you have conducted your interviews and selected your candidate, please communicate this information to your TA recruiter within 24 hours of reviewing the candidates. While it is possible your first choice has already accepted an offer elsewhere, the candidate who does accept the role will appreciate the urgency you have placed on hiring.

Today's candidates are seeking employers who are clear in identifying the responsibilities of a job, and they're seeking job opportunities with higher pay, a positive job culture, flexibility, and a better work-life balance. It helps to inform the candidate up front what the pay rate will be for the position and what you expect from a successful candidate. For instance, if the role requires team members to work on-site, communicating this in the job posting is essential – but repeating it during the interview lets them know this is not negotiable.

The Hiring Process

Odds are high that you are reading this after engaging with a Talent Acquisition (TA) Recruiter, who will help you throughout your candidate search. Have you wondered what you need to do, or what the TA recruiter does during the hiring process? The Hiring Timeline below outlines Westgate's hiring process.

HIRING PROCESS TIMELINE

The process above may vary. Your TA Recruiter will inform you of any variations in this schedule.

SERVICE FROM THE HEART

Westgate's guest service philosophy focuses on ensuring each guest enjoys their vacation experience at any of our properties, from the moment they arrive until the moment they leave. To achieve this, it is essential that we hire team members who take pride in delivering high-quality service to each guest, every day.

When reviewing applications and interviewing potential team members, look for examples that the candidate demonstrates proficiency in delivering Service from the Heart.

- **We are Ready** – This means team members are knowledgeable about their property and the nearby area to best assist guests; they are always smiling; they arrive at work in a neat and clean uniform; and ready to be of service to our guests. Being ready doesn't mean the team member must have all the answers, rather, they take the initiative to find an answer for our guest when they personally do not know.
- **We are Proactive** – These team members anticipate the needs of guests and work with a sense of urgency to resolve any complaint a guest may make. They elevate transactions to interactions by personalizing each encounter by using each guest's last name, and they actively listen to guests to anticipate needs before the guest even makes a request.
- **We are Committed** – Westgate team members are committed to providing our guests with memorable vacation experiences. They react promptly to address a guest's concern. They are empowered to solve situations for our guests instead of passing the problem off to someone else. Committed team members follow up with a guest to ensure a concern is resolved to their satisfaction and to thank the guest for giving us the opportunity to fix the problem.

More information about the core behaviors underpinning Service from the Heart may be found in the Service Philosophy Toolkit [Will update this with link to this resource when launched].

To help you identify candidates who effectively demonstrate Service from the Heart qualities, each Interview Guide includes questions designed to gather information about a candidate's ability to deliver high quality guest service.

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

Once you have identified your hiring need, met with a TA recruiter, and the job has been posted, your recruiter will review job applications and resumes to identify candidate meeting the required skills and criteria of the role. The recruiter then forwards these to you on a schedule you've discussed in prior meetings. It is important for you to first review each resume your TA recruiter sends you to ensure time is wisely spent on interviewing candidates who will be valuable additions to your team.

Reviewing Resumes

While TA recruiters will screen all resumes and applications to select candidates who meet your hiring wants and needs, it is still important for you to review each resume to identify your top candidates. You should review each resume prior to a candidate's interview to refresh your memory on what this prospective team member may bring to your team.

Before you review, identify the things that disqualify a candidate for you. For instance, he has no direct or related experience in this type of role; she has a pattern of leaving jobs within six months; he lives outside the area and is seeking a remote role. Having a list of your non-negotiables will help you to eliminate candidates from your list.

Here are some things you should look for in the resume review:

- Is there a summary statement? Does it align to the position he or she is applying for?
- Does this person demonstrate job stability, even if not recently? Have they been promoted in any previous jobs?
- Do their job skills in a current or former job match this role? If they don't have direct experience, do the skills they have transfer to this role?
- If certifications are needed for this role, does this applicant have them?
- What skills and expertise do they list for their current or former roles? Are these beneficial to your team?
- Is the person a doer? Doers list the responsibilities they have (Developed a daily cleaning checklist for team)

- Is this person results-oriented? If so, they'll list awards and the metrics related to results (increased site sales 25% year over year)
- Do they list individual successes or team efforts?

Seeking the answers to these questions guides you in selecting candidates who are a good fit and may add the expertise and skills your team needs.

Once you have conducted reviews, quickly notify your TA recruiter which candidates will be moving forward in the interview process. Their next step will be to contact candidates and conduct screening interviews. He or she will then let you know the results of screening interviews so that your interviews may be scheduled.

SCHEDULING INTERVIEWS

When you're experiencing a hiring need, your life isn't on hold – nor are those of your candidates. It is important to identify days when you may be out of the office or unavailable when communicating with your TA recruiter. For example, you may be helping staff another property for the next month, which may require you to conduct phone or online interviews.

While your preference may be to hold in-person interviews, flexibility is important to speed up the hiring process and to ensure candidates with inflexible work schedules at their existing jobs can be interviewed too. Phone, Zoom, and Microsoft Teams interviews open you up to interviewing these prospective hires.

Remember to block out enough time not only for your interviews, but time to prepare and complete post-interview notes. Whether in-person, on the phone, or online, give yourself 15 to 30 minutes prior to meeting to complete that last minute review of the resume, review the interview questions, and make sure your technology components work, if needed. Allow yourself about 10 minutes after each interview to write down your comments and follow up questions while they're fresh in your mind.

PREPARING THE INTERVIEW SPACE

Whether you are conducting interviews on-site or online, ensure you have an interview space free of distractions. Organize the paperwork on your desk, or remove it completely, when conducting interviews in your office. If possible, schedule interviews in a conference room. Ideally, you should only have a laptop with the interviewing guide and the candidate's resume open on screen, or paper copies of each in front of you, along with two pens for taking notes.

For in-person interviews, have water or coffee available to offer the candidate.

Turn your telephone ringer off if you're not using it for the interview. If you're working remotely, shut the door to the room you're in. When interviewing online, select a solid color background and a well-lit space.

Make sure your microphone and speakers work. Close any browser windows that are not directly related to the interview.

Not only does this eliminate distractions, but it also communicates to your candidate that you are focused on them and what they have to say.

You Are Being Interviewed, Too!

Often, we're so intent on our hiring need and filling the role that we fail to realize that the candidate is also deciding whether they want to work for us.

What does this mean for you? In short, take the time to prepare for the interview as if you're the one getting hired as this candidate's boss. Put yourself in their shoes. Review their resume, have your questions ready, and anticipate their questions to convey how we value our team members.

Take this opportunity to be an ambassador for the Westgate brand. Embody our mission statement: We love what we do, who we do it with, and who we do it for by demonstrating a positive, upbeat attitude.

THE INTERVIEW

Greeting the Candidate

First impressions are lasting impressions. It's a time-worn cliché but it is true. If you are ready and waiting for your candidate to arrive, you demonstrate that you are looking forward to meeting with them to learn whether you can make an effective team. Even better, if you have already communicated with this candidate, if you send them a message the morning of the interview, letting them know you're looking forward to meeting them, this reinforces that we value the candidate and their time.

Offer the candidate water or coffee if you're interviewing in person, then get settled in. Next, introduce yourself, identify your role and how long you've been at Westgate. Then ask the candidate to tell you a little bit about themselves. It's helpful to ask them how they found out about the job or what they know about Westgate.

Once you've learned a little about the candidate and shared information about yourself, quickly review the job description and outline the agenda for the interview. An example can be seen below:

"Danielle, thank you for meeting with me today. As you know, we are currently seeking an accounts receiving associate and are meeting with several candidates to fill this position. Your background appears to be a good fit for our needs. Over the next 45 minutes, I will ask you some questions about your experiences working in this area. For some questions, I may ask you for more information.

In some of these questions, I may ask you to tell me about a past situation and how you addressed it. This helps me gain a better understanding of your work style. There are no wrong answers to these questions.

If you have questions for me, please feel free to ask. We will have 15 minutes to answer your questions at the end of the interview.” Sometimes, the candidate may ask you a question or two before you begin.

It’s okay to answer these questions to help put the person at ease.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

In this toolkit, you will find a separate interview guide containing questions designed to identify the candidate’s competency in several key areas, as well as their skill in providing high-quality guest service. For selected positions, role-specific interview guides containing questions and scenarios encountered in these jobs are available. If you are unsure which interview guide to use, partner with your TA recruiter.

It is best to review these guides before you interview any candidates to identify and select interview questions that best fit your interviewing style and will gather the most impactful information to make a hiring decision. This is important, as you will ask the same series of questions of every candidate to ensure you obtain similar information from each person to distinguish who will be the best fit for the position.

Pay careful attention to the candidate’s responses. If an answer does not provide enough information about their competencies, ask the candidate a follow-up probing question. Probing questions are provided within each section of the interview guide.

The goal of interviews is to gain as much information as possible to select and hire the best person for the role. Incomplete answers may have you wondering if you made the right choice. Asking probing questions will help to eliminate doubt about what the candidate was saying or second-guessing who you’ve chosen to hire.

Eliminating Bias

Do you like Mounds or Almond Joy? What do you prefer more: vacationing in the mountains or at the beach? Which season is best: summer or winter?

We all have preferences, or biases, in favor of one thing over another. These preferences aren’t necessarily a bad thing. However, when hiring, it is important to be aware of your personal biases to avoid making hiring decisions using them.

By avoiding biases in hiring, you create a more diverse workplace for your team. Surveys of recent job seekers found that when leadership is inclusive and has a diverse workforce, employees are 39% more likely to be engaged. Additionally, companies with a diverse workforce obtain 19% higher profits than companies with a workforce that is uniform.

When you ask each candidate the exact same questions, then rate each question on a predetermined scale afterwards, you will select the best candidate for the role based on their actual skills and abilities. However, there are some common unconscious biases we all have.

- **Halo effect bias** – This happens when our first impression of a person influences how we feel about them. “Oh, she’s really smart, I think she’d be really good at this task, even though she’s never done it.”
- **Horn effect bias** – The opposite bias, which happens if the candidate makes a statement that you disagree with. “He hates football. How can anyone hate it? I’ll bet he’ll also hate doing this task, too.”
- **Similar to Me bias** – Occurs when the candidate is most like us. We think highly of people who are like us. “He doesn’t have any experience doing this, but he graduated from the same college as me. He probably already knows this – he just hasn’t been asked to do it yet.”

An important thing to remember about biases is that your assumptions may not be correct. Keep an open mind and listen to what the candidate tells you directly, rather than assuming.

Your Legal Responsibilities

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) is the government agency tasked with ensuring employers in the United States consider all applicants for a job, regardless of their race, religion, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, political beliefs, marital status, disability, or age. Your TA recruiter will post the job opening in language that confirms to federal EEOC regulations.

When interviewing candidates, asking questions in a way that does not discriminate against a person for any of the above reasons is the right thing to do – and it is the law. Failure to abide by EEOC guidelines can result in fines and penalties for Westgate. Only ask questions that relate to the candidates’ ability to do the job, with or without reasonable accommodation.

The questions in the left column below are phrased correctly, while the ones on the right are illegal.

Legally Allowed Questions	Illegal Questions
Are you over the age of 18?	How old are you?
Are you legally authorized to work in the US?	Are you a U.S citizen? Where were you born?
Do you have reliable transportation?	Do you have a car?
Are you able to perform the specific duties of this role?	Do you have any disabilities?

This job requires you to lift boxes weighing 50 pounds. Can you do this?	
Are there days or times that you are unavailable to work?	Do you have kids? Will you need daycare?
Do you belong to professional/trade organizations related to this role?	Do you belong to any clubs or social organizations?
What are your long-term career goals?	How much longer do you plan to work before you retire?
Are you able to work overtime? Can you travel?	Who will watch your kids when you must travel?
Are you available to work the schedule for this role?	What religion do you practice?
Is there additional information we may need to check your job references, such as a nickname or different name?	Are you married? Is this your maiden name?

If you have any questions you'd like to include in the interview, but are unsure whether it is legal to ask, partner with your TA recruiter to review the question with you. It may be possible to reframe the question in a way that obtains the needed information in an acceptable way.

RED FLAGS TO CONSIDER

Many times, we hire individuals and later ask ourselves how we made such a poor choice. This person does not fulfil our expectations and is not performing anywhere close to what we discussed in the interview, but they made such a great impression while interviewing – or did they?

It is helpful to be aware of some red flags to look for when reviewing resumes and interviewing candidates. One or two may not necessarily be a bad thing, but if they keep stacking up, take notice.

- Did they submit a resume and application free from spelling or grammatical errors? They may have been in a rush, or it may indicate that they don't pay attention to details.
- Is she late for the interview? She may not have anticipated what traffic is like getting to your location. If she apologizes for this, this is a possibility, but if she shrugs it off, that may be her usual pattern of behavior.
- How is he dressed? He doesn't need to wear a designer suit, but is he well-groomed and in clean, neat clothing without rips, tears, or stains?
- What is their work history? Did they work at all their previous jobs for six months or less? Did they

- spend 2 years or more at one? Is there an employment gap? A history of job hopping every few months without an increase in salary or responsibilities may indicate this candidate will repeat this trend with you. In the current job market, candidates may have a long gap of unemployment. Ask probing questions if their length of employment pattern concerns you.
- Why do they leave their jobs? If the reason says, 'seeking more responsibility', but the next job has the same title and less pay, ask why. There may be a valid reason, but you don't know until you ask.

If the answers to your questions about red flags do not satisfy you, partner with your TA recruiter to discuss the concerns. Together, you may decide whether you do not need to be concerned or if this may be a valid reason to remove the candidate for further consideration.

WHAT THE CANDIDATE WANTS TO KNOW

While you interview candidates to identify and select someone for a position, those same candidates are also interviewing YOU to determine if this job is the right fit for them, too. Sharing how Westgate values our team members, how we invest in team members, and how we seek to develop and promote our existing workforce helps the candidate to see why working for Westgate is a wise decision.

Share your Westgate experience, especially if you've been promoted into your role. Talk about your team members, how long they've been here. Discuss the training, benefits, perks, and wellness programs we offer.

In a job-seeker's market, it helps to anticipate the questions candidates ask most often. Incorporate some of this information into your conversation with a candidate or have these answers ready in the event they are asked.

- What's your company mission statement?
- What don't you like about working for your company?
- So, what's in it for me? (This candidate probably isn't a good fit, but the question should be answered)
- Will you keep in touch? When can I expect to hear back from you?
- What are the steps you take as my manager to ensure my success in this role? What are your procedures for my termination if I'm not successful?
- Why isn't anybody that works at your company happy?

As you interview candidates, take notice of the questions you hear often, so that you can anticipate these to possibly include the information in your opening comments when starting the interview with later candidates.

TAKING NOTES

While you are conducting the interview, it is important to focus your attention on the candidate's responses to your questions. Equally important is taking time to write down key details as the candidates share them during the interview.

After you've conducted six or seven interviews, it will be difficult to remember which person shared that they've been teaching themselves JavaScript in their spare time; is taking a Dale Carnegie leadership course; or is fluent in four languages. Each section of the interview guide has a blank section for you to write down information relevant to the current candidate.

Keep all notes directly related to the skills and abilities he or she brings to the role.

- "Has reservations experience,"
- "Supervised team of six people,"
- "Go-to person for running banquets",
- "Has not worked in a customer-facing position," or
- "Helped at aunt's bed and breakfast over summer breaks in college"

are all brief, specific statements that help you to recall the candidate's overall abilities.

If you can't get notes for everything you'd like to remember during the interview, take a few minutes afterwards to return to the interview guide. Complete notes in any section you've left blank before you meet with another candidate or return to your duties.

CONCLUDING THE INTERVIEW

After you have asked your questions and answered the questions the candidate has for you, thank the candidate for meeting with you today. If you are on-site, walk them out to the lobby.

Inform the candidate where you are in this interview process, especially if you have several more candidate interviews to complete. Give the candidate a time frame they can realistically expect a response. Let them know that either way, they will hear from you or the TA recruiter by (date).

Invite the candidate to contact you or the TA recruiter with any questions and warmly wish them a good day/evening.

POST INTERVIEW

After completing each interview, before starting another interview or returning to other job duties, take the time to complete your notes in the interview guide for that candidate. It is critical that you do this while the interview is fresh in your mind, as it ensures you recorded the details helpful in making the hiring decision.

Feedback Form

Each section of the interview guide contains a rating scale for each interview question. Once you have completed filling in your notes for each section, rate the candidate on each of these areas, with 1 indicating poor and 5 indicating excellent. Communicate with your TA recruiter that you have completed your interview with this candidate and give him or her a brief impression of how the interview went.

A Rating and Consensus Guide is provided in the Hiring Toolkit for you to record the ratings and overall impressions of each candidate in one place. It is helpful to look at the numbers and notes in one place, especially when you have several excellent hiring prospects.

Please inform your TA recruiter within 24 hours if you know for sure that you do not want to move forward with a candidate, along with your reasons for not proceeding. This allows the recruiter to communicate with the candidate.

Partnering with TA

After you have conducted all your scheduled interviews, completed feedback for each candidate, and used the data on the Ratings and Consensus form to identify the top candidates for this role, email your TA recruiter to set up a meeting to discuss your findings. It is common to have two or three very strong candidates after the interviews. Your recruiter will help you identify the person to hire by asking inclusionary or exclusionary questions.

In the event you complete your interview process and do not want to move forward with any of the candidates, discuss your findings with your recruiter. It is possible to have another hiring leader interview each candidate to gain another perspective.

If that is the option selected, inform the second interviewer which interview questions you asked, so that candidates aren't asked the same questions again. You may choose to share your completed Interview and Ratings and Consensus guides with the hiring leader, as they may use the information to identify the questions they will ask.

Making the Offer

You have decided who you will hire. Congratulations!

Contact your TA recruiter to make the offer and complete the onboarding documentation. It is important for you to communicate with your new hire directly by phone to welcome him or her to the Westgate team.

TA will contact the candidate and send them a formal offer letter email through SmartRecruiter. Once the chosen candidate accepts and returns the formal offer, the TA will contact the remaining candidates to let them know another candidate has been selected, after the signed offer has been received.

Onboarding

Now that you have a new hire, an Onboarding Coordinator (OC) will confirm the candidate is listed in SmartRecruiter as hired.

The OC will send the New Hire Packet (NHP) through DocuSign. Then the OC will call the candidate to welcome them to the Westgate family, congratulate them on their new role, review the New Hire Packet and give the new hire the timeline to complete the packet. The OC informs the new hire that they are the point of contact for any questions until their first day at Westgate.

Within 24 hours of the candidate signing their NHP, the new team member will be instructed to complete drug testing and may be scheduled for a physical exam. The OC will call the candidate to detail the process. After pre-employment testing has been screened, the OC will send your new team member an email with instructions for registering for ADP and completing their I-9 (or I-9 document attestation).

The new hire's start date is selected, and he or she will be scheduled for New Hire Orientation (NHO). It's recommended that you reach out to your new hire to welcome them to Westgate and supply information about their first week in their new role. Convey your excitement that they've chosen to join your team. Congratulations on adding a new member to the Westgate family!

RESOURCES

Hiring Leader Interviewing Toolkit – Interview Guide

Hiring Leader Interviewing Toolkit – Candidate Feedback and Consensus Rating Forms

Hiring Leader Interviewing Toolkit – Position Specific Guides

Job Seekers are Gaining Control Over Hiring

What Hourly Workers Really Want

What Your Future Employees Want Most

From Q&A to Z: The Hiring Manager’s Complete Interview Guide

Service from the Heart – Service Philosophy Toolkit