



Managing Knock-out Questions, Part 1

Marcia LaReau, PhD

This document is an addendum to the Blog: Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS): Knock-out Questions, Part 1, published on April 21, 2018.

Reading that blog post first will give you context for the information here.

* * * * *

Since the Applicant Tracking Systems auto-eliminate candidates through knock-out questions, this paper identifies how to approach three types of questions:

1. Work permissions
2. Work experience
3. Software ability and technical questions

1. Work Permissions

These questions refer to the ability of a candidate to legally work in the United States. Be very careful in reading the questions and think through the qualifications.

EXAMPLE:

H-1B visas are for employees who have specialty occupations. It is unlikely that a recent college grad would have an H-1B visa.

Further, individuals cannot sponsor or apply for their H-1B visa. This has to be done by a U.S. employer.

If a candidate checks the box indicating they have an H-1B visa, and their resume does not indicate employment in a position requiring specialty skills, then the person will likely be eliminated from the candidate pool.

Solution:

Recognize that these are legalities. Conduct any necessary research to identify if flexibility is available.

When there are no exceptions, be totally honest with the system.

2. Work experience:

Some of these questions may focus on areas where thinking broadly about past experience is acceptable and expected.

EXAMPLE:

How many years supervisory experience do you have?





Response: Many individuals have not supervised other in the work place, but have extensive experience in other arenas in their life. Examples might be in non-profit work.

One of my clients did not have event management in her formal work experience, however, she had managed every aspect of a tri-state walk-a-thon for a major non-profit.

Solution:

Look carefully at the job posting. Think through the specific requirement in the knock-out question. Ask: does your experience prepare you to meet the demands of the job.

If you truly believe that you can do the job and your experience suffices...

AND

If you can respond to any questions asked by a hiring professional, then use that experience in answering the knock-out question.

3. Software ability and technical questions:

Here again, we are facing a double-edged sword.

WHY?

Because if the position requires in-depth ability and the candidate doesn't have it, they will be embarrassed and possibly fired for lying on their application.

AND

If only moderate ability is required, a candidate may over qualify him or herself by checking "expert."

EXAMPLE:

The knock-out questions include 20-30 software applications and ask the candidate to select their level of expertise. The candidate, in a hurry, checks "Expert" on every software name that looked familiar.

The Applicant Tracking System marks this candidate as over-qualified and auto-rejects the application.

Solution:

Be sure to apply for position that you are truly qualified for and that match your skill sets.

