

CEO Interview Guide



A publication of the Iowa Hospital Association

Table of Contents

Forward	1
Background/Experience	3
Communications— Community Relations—Marketing	4
Finance	5
Management Skills	5
Health System Development	7
Community Involvement.....	7
Concluding Questions	8

This document was prepared under the auspices of the IHA Congress of Trustees Governing Board. IHA gratefully acknowledges the assistance of the hospital CEOs and Trustees who helped edit this document.

The suggested questions in this interview guide should be used only as an initial starting point. As circumstances dictate add appropriate questions and eliminate those questions that do not apply to the candidate.

Introduction To The CEO INTERVIEW GUIDE

When a CEO vacancy occurs at your hospital, either when your CEO announces his or her resignation or when your board decides that a change in CEOs must be made, the board faces one of the most important decisions it will make on behalf of the hospital, selecting a new chief executive to lead and manage the hospital.

The change that a hospital board faces in the selection of a new CEO provides the board an opportunity to assess the hospital's current position and to select the best candidate to bring new direction to the hospital. The board should not rush to make a decision to fill the vacancy but take the time to fully and carefully assess the qualifications of their new chief executive, one who will provide leadership and direction for their community hospital. The job description for the CEO position should be reviewed and revised. The job description will identify key responsibilities of the position and will assist the board and selection committee in identifying attributes and skills the next CEO will need.

Because of the importance of this decision, the board should consider use of an interim administrator to give the board all the time they need to select the right person for the vacancy they seek to fill. Interim administrators are generally recently retired administrators who will provide competent interim management until a new CEO comes on board. Using an interim administrator may also provide the board with a unique opportunity to assess and address special problems. IHA can assist hospitals in seeking and identifying an interim CEO. System affiliated hospitals may be provided an interim administrator by the system to assure continuity in management during the selection process.

Interview Guide

When a vacancy occurs the board has several choices in addressing how to fill a CEO vacancy. The board can hire a search firm. The firm will meet with the board, identify the type of candidate they are seeking, identify salary ranges, benefits, develop contracts and all the other details. The value of retaining a search firm is that you do buy that firm's experience and their expertise and objectivity in directing the search for a new CEO and matching the appropriate person to the vacancy you seek to fill.

A second alternative is for the hospital board to appoint an internal search committee of three to four people. The committee will advertise the opening in appropriate professional journals, newspapers and through their state hospital association, screen the significant number of applications and resumes, select a reasonable number of apparently qualified applicants with references checked and qualifications verified, and conduct the initial screening interview. The full board should actually interview two or three qualified candidates for the CEO position drawn from the candidates initially interviewed and recommended by the search committee.

A third approach is to use a general management consulting firm to screen applications on behalf of the board serving as an objective external search committee. The firm will present to the board 6-8 candidates that have been screened and interviewed much in the same fashion as the internal search committee. The board can pick two or three for an on site interview.

Interview Guide

If the board elects to use an interim administrator that individual is often someone with several years of hospital administrative experience that can assist the board and the internal search committee in screening resumes for the vacant position. Depending upon the size of the hospital and the complexity of the organization, any one of these four methods of CEO selection can serve the needs of the institution.

When interviews are arranged plan ahead, know what you want to find out. Know something in advance about the CEO candidate that you will be interviewing. Background information about the candidate, especially education, credentials, work experience as well as outside activities can be drawn from the resume.

During the interview maintain a relaxed atmosphere and remember you're there to listen, not talk. Allow each board member to ask one or two questions. Conclude the interview with a statement letting the candidate know what may be expected to happen next. For example, "We'll advise you of our decision after we've completed scheduled interviews within ten days." If you extend an offer of employment, the applicant will either accept or decline. As a professional courtesy, you should also follow up with a letter to unsuccessful candidates as well.

The interview is also an opportunity for the candidate and family members to get acquainted with the community. Make sure there is time for the applicant to get to know the community.

The suggested questions are a guide intended to provide initial direction to the interview and should not be considered mandatory. Questions should be eliminated or modified as circumstances dictate.

Interview Guide

Background/Experience

1. Describe your experience in the health care field.
 - ✓ Tell us about yourself—how do you feel about yourself?
 - ✓ What jobs have you had? Why did you leave?
 - ✓ Why do you want to work for our hospital?
 - ✓ Describe your vision of health care delivery and the role this hospital would have.
 - ✓ Describe your strengths and weaknesses.
 - ✓ How do you deal with areas where you are not as strong?
 - ✓ What were the three most important decisions of your life?
 - ✓ What books have you read in the past six months?
2. Number of years in senior management positions in:
 - ✓ Hospital Administration _____
 - ✓ Skilled nursing and nursing home administration _____
 - ✓ Home health care _____
 - ✓ Physician clinic _____
 - ✓ Other (*explain*) _____
3. Describe your academic preparation—college—graduate and continuing education.
 - ✓ How does your education and continuing education relate to our needs?

Interview Guide

Background/Experience

4. What experience, if any, have you had in the areas of
 - ✓ mental health
 - ✓ substance abuse
 - ✓ critical access hospitals
 - ✓ hospice
5. What has been your experience in a **competitive** health care environment, specifically in developing strategies and activities that succeed?
6. How do you balance health care access, quality and cost?
7. Do you have a specific reason for leaving your present employment **apart from** this present opportunity? Please explain if your answer is yes.
8. In terms of your next career move, what are you looking for and how would these objectives be met by the position of chief executive officer of _____ hospital and its related organizations?

Interview Guide

Communications— Community Relations—Marketing

1. What do you consider to be the most important communication skills necessary for this position?
2. Illustrate that you understand marketing and can affectively promote services and programs.
3. What do you consider your most successful public relations endeavor?
4. What do you consider your strong points in negotiating tactics and strategies when dealing with individual physicians and secondly, in dealing with the medical staff as a group?
5. How effective have you been at recruiting physicians?
6. What kind of background check do you conduct in addition to the usual references? In your experience, how reliable are references?
7. Do you have any experience in fund development?
8. How have you helped develop a strong image of your hospital and/or clinic in the community?
9. How do you keep abreast of trends and issues in the health care field?

Interview Guide

Communications— Community Relations—Marketing

10. What is your role in political advocacy at the local, state and federal levels?
11. Public hospitals in Iowa (municipal, county and state) operate under an OPEN MEETINGS LAW which means that any time a quorum or more is gathered the press can be present. How do you see yourself effectively processing sensitive issues? *(Please note, there are some exceptions to this law dealing with legally protected confidentialities.)*

Interview Guide

Finance

1. What has been your role in:
 - ✓ Budget preparation?
 - ✓ Budget performance?
 - ✓ Handling budget variances?
2. How well do you understand various Iowa hospital payment systems (e.g., Medicare, Medicaid, Wellmark Blue Cross Blue Shield)
3. List one or two specific examples of programs or services which you have implemented that have or will produce additional revenue.
4. What has been your experience in dealing, negotiating or contracting with an HMO, PPO, insurance company or other risk assumption organization?
5. What experience have you had in reorganizing staff to meet:
 - ✓ A reduced occupancy in the hospital?
 - ✓ Reduced demand for physician services in a clinic?
6. What experience have you had in addressing various compliance and regulatory issues and requirements (e.g., HIPAA)?

Interview Guide

Management Skills

1. Are you a leader or a follower? Give an example.
2. How would you describe or characterize your management style?
3. How would your present employer or board chair evaluate your performance?
4. Describe your three or four major accomplishments during the past year.
5. Describe a past management decision that wasn't successful? Why wasn't it successful? How would you deal with it differently today?
6. What specific management strengths would you bring to our hospital?
7. What traits or skills do you look for in recruiting and hiring the people that work directly with you?
8. What has been the greatest challenge facing your present hospital?
9. What do you believe will be your greatest challenge at our hospital?
10. How would you rate your effectiveness in dealing with upper level associates in management?
11. How do you keep subordinates informed about decisions important to their performance?

Interview Guide

Management Skills

12. How well do you work under pressure or in an emergency? Can you give an example?
13. How have decisions been made in organizations in which you have held the position of chief executive?
14. How good are you at conflict resolution? In brief, describe the process you have employed or may have to employ in the future.
15. Do you use the setting of goals and objectives and their attainment in your management practice?
16. What has been your specific role in developing and implementing strategic planning?
17. How good are you at delegating authority? Do you exact strict accountability attendant to the authority you have delegated?
18. As chief executive officer, do you see yourself as being responsible for the development of management skills and mentoring your upper level management staff?
19. How important do you see creativity and innovation in guiding the destiny of your organization?
20. How do you define the role of the board of trustees of a not-for-profit hospital?
21. What is your experience and style in working with a board of trustees?

Interview Guide

Management Skills

22. What are your two greatest strengths in working with a board?
23. What customer service and employee satisfaction initiatives have you initiated in prior positions? What is your view regarding employee satisfaction and customer service?
24. From your review of this hospital, what are the issues and challenges this hospital faces?

Interview Guide

Health System Development

1. What new programs have you created? Explain their development.
2. How do you see leadership of hospitals/clinics positioning their organizations in the future?
3. What is your present view of developing affiliations with larger organizations? What do you see as benefits or detriments inherent in such affiliations?
4. What experience have you had in the development and operation of a local integrated health care system?
5. How do you see the hospital of tomorrow continuing to be the focal point of health care delivery in its community?

Interview Guide

Community Involvement

1. Describe your community activities and hobbies.
2. To what extent do you see yourself involved in community activities?
3. Will you live in our community?
4. In your opinion, what would make _____^{town}_____, Iowa, a satisfactory environment for your spouse and children?

Interview Guide

Concluding Questions

1. Where do you hope to be in five years? What is your career goal?
2. What would you like to ask us?
3. Ask for references if they have not been provided.
4. What is your earliest date of availability?

Interview Guide

Notes

The Iowa Hospital Association gratefully acknowledges the assistance of those hospital administrators and trustees who contributed questions for this interview guide.